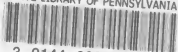


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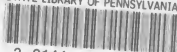


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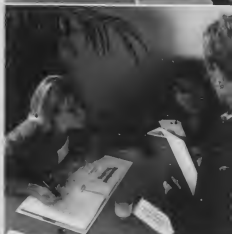
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Letter from the Editor

I can hardly believe it, but it's April already and that time of the year when change is definitely in the air. For our part, we are looking to find out how we can further develop Training Journal to ensure that it meets your needs as a

reader. Very soon we shall be sending out a survey to you to find out your views about the journal and we would like you to complete this as honestly and quickly as you can, so that we can begin to take your journal forward.

One of our themes this month is knowledge management. Whether or not it is just another fad, this concept has many implications for trainers. To find out what it is and what it means in practice, turn to page 6. We also have a selection of articles about performance appraisals, including one that looks at how to overcome some of the problems commonly associated with them.

Is flexible working truly an option for the majority of today's workforce? In this issue, one of our contributors looks at the business case for it and explains how to ensure that flexible working delivers on its promise 'The future for trainers' is the fifth article in a regular series written by members of the Forum for Technology in Training, who aim to provide an awareness of, and stimulate debate about, some of the issues surrounding the use of technology in providing training solutions.

As many of you already know, HRD Week 1999 – one of the major events in the training and development calendar – takes place in London from 15–18 April. This year we are exhibiting on stand 455. If you are going to the exhibition, please come and say hello. We look forward to meeting you.

Sylvia Worth
Sylvia Worth

Report evaluates University for Industry in North East

The Government has published an evaluation of Sunderland University's University for Industry project. The study, *An Evaluation of Aspects of the University for Industry in the North East*, was carried out by Warwick University's Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research. It highlights the importance of partnerships in education to encourage more people to learn, and the potential of the University for Industry to act

as independent broker between learners and education providers. The study also shows how innovative marketing of learning can improve take-up – more than 5,000 people signed up to the project during the nine months covered by the evaluation. Other important lessons for the Ufi include the key challenge of demonstrating to owners of small firms what it can offer them, and the importance of personal support in technology-based learning.

LETTERS

Send your letters to the Editor, Training Journal, Clive House, The Business Park, Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4EH.

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Learning at Work Day

The Campaign for Learning has announced plans for Learning at Work Day, which is taking place as part of Adult Learners' Week on Thursday 20 May. The aim of the Day is to create thousands of learning opportunities, both formal and informal, in workplaces throughout the UK. The Campaign will be urging chief executives to 'walk the talk' of learning at work by taking part in a day-long 'back to the floor' style job swaps, in which employee and boss will work alongside each other, but reverse their usual roles. On the Day, the Campaign for Learning Chief Executive, Bill Lucas, will be swapping jobs with office administrator Gloria Phyll.

The Campaign is producing a planning guide to help

workplaces organise activities for Learning at Work Day. It will include information on how to organise learning lunch hours and job swaps, where to find out about subjects that affect all workers such as time and stress management, how to set up a reading group and related activities such as becoming an Investor in People.

A Learning at Work Day Briefing can be obtained by writing to learning at Work Day, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, WC2N 6EF or by faxing them on 0171 930 1551. Information about Learning at Work Day will also be revealed on the Campaign for Learning's web site at www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk.

Computer skills are crucial

Computer skills will be crucial for every working person if companies are to survive into the next millennium, claimed BT's head of research, Professor Peter Cochrane, in a live satellite debate held recently. But his audience of around 8,000, who took part in the debate, also heard that although a survey of companies had found that 83 per cent said they expected the

Internet to underpin the business relationships in the next five years, only 21 per cent had developed an Internet strategy. The debate, *2010 – A Business Odyssey*, organised by the DTI Innovation Unit, looked at how business issues will change over the next decade. Extracts and key parts of the debate are featured on www.innovation.gov.uk.

The project was established by the University of Sunderland and the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Copies of the report can be

obtained from DfEE Publications, PO Box 5050, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6ZQ, tel 0845 602 2260, e-mail: dfee@prologistics.co.uk

Nurses most at risk from violence at work

Violent Times, a report from the TUC, suggests that one in five workers is likely to be attacked or verbally abused this year. It reveals that one in three nurses has been violently attacked or abused at work, closely followed by security workers and employees in care home. The report also shows that younger women are most likely to be assaulted in the workplace. Eleven per cent of women aged 25-34

had suffered a physical attack, compared to 6 per cent of men in the same age group.

Several industries report dramatic increases in assaults on their staff - 70 per cent of teachers believe that violence in schools is increasing, attacks on Employment Service staff have increased twelve-fold since 1987 and assaults on railway workers have more than tripled in the last three years.

Mencap Outward Bound Challenge

The 1999 Mencap Outward Bound Challenge aims to spur on employees to achieve more than they ever believed possible, while raising funds for people with learning disabilities. Organised by The Outward Bound Trust, the Challenge is now in its fifth year. Between now and September, organisations can sign up groups of between eight and twelve people to take part in the gruelling three-day sporting challenge on land and water at one of

three centres in Scotland, Wales or the Lake District. Challengers will be asked to brace the elements to complete their course, which will test new ideas, drive and teamwork, and include abseiling, rock climbing, mountain biking, Canadian canoeing and walking.

For further information contact Graham Stephenson at Mencap on 0171 696 5553.

CITB seeks volunteers to trial safety audit package

The Construction Industry Training Board is looking for three or four small- or medium-sized construction firms to take part in a trial of its revised Health and Safety Audit package. Participants will be given a free package, which they will be asked to try out for a period of six to eight weeks. Their comments on its structure and ease of

use will be incorporated into the programme before its relaunch in the summer. The package is designed to help companies set up, maintain and monitor high standards of health and safety on site.

Companies wishing to take part in the trial should call Dave Mason on 01485 577486.

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PROVEN TO WORK

IN BRIEF

The Open & Distance Learning Quality Council of the UK and the distance Education and Training Council of the USA – the principle accrediting bodies for open and distance learning providers in their respective countries – have agreed a programme of future co-operation.

MindGym, a multimedia training solution from Melrose, has won the BAFTA Interactive Entertainment Award. The product was successful in the comedy category, which recognises the best use of humour in any interactive media.

Computer based training specialists, Pathlore Software, and the training and software company, John Matchett Ltd, are collaborating to meet the growing demand for unified training management. They will produce *CBT Connection*, a database application that enables companies to manage both online and traditional training programmes for many learners from a single console.

The Information Technology National Training Organisation has given approval for Global Training Solutions A+ Certification courseware to contribute towards the IT Scottish/National Vocational Qualification and the Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

QA Training and the University of Kent have launched a new Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology, aimed at graduates in full-time employment. The diploma provides a route for graduates in other disciplines to retrain in IT.

Fujikura Europe, UK provider of fibre optic training, has been awarded City & Guilds approval and is now accredited to offer 3,466 Optical Fibre Installation and Testing (single-mode and multimode) courses from its purpose-built training centre in Wiltshire.

Lord Oxford, Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords since 1990, has become the new President of the Institute for Supervision and Management.

NTO ambassadors appointed to aid regional development

NTO regional representatives have been appointed to spearhead a drive to bring a national skills perspective to regional development. The initiative, supported by the Department for Education and Employment, aims to improve education, training and business competitiveness by developing close links between National Training Organisations and Regional Development Agencies, TECs, colleges and careers services.

The NTO regional 'ambassadors' will determine how NTOs can best contribute to regional development and provide a two-way channel of communication between regional bodies and the NTO network. They will be supported by NTO 'champion employers' who are expected to play a major role in regional committees and activities. The initiative, co-ordinated by NTO National Council, includes research to identify

NTO's regional presence and capability, and the development of a strategy, which will enable NTOs to contribute most effectively to the regional skills agenda. Regional profiles and a range of promotional materials and guides will be produced as part of a communications operation, aimed at regional government offices, TECs, colleges, universities and careers services, as well as RDAs and NTOs.

Too few graduates find work

Record numbers of graduates are chasing a limited number of blue chip jobs. Yet according to an annual review of graduates, published recently by the Institute for Employment Studies, only a minority found jobs with the major recruiters. One in three went into temporary or short-term jobs, while many more entered relatively low level jobs.

The survey shows that those graduating in computer science, engineering and maths, key disciplines for the

information society, as well as in medicine and related subjects and education, were the most likely to move quickly into high level managerial, professional or technician jobs and have the lowest unemployment rates.

However, despite the good job prospects, the numbers starting degrees in physical sciences, and engineering and technology have been falling: down by nearly 10 per cent between 1995 and 1997, as has the proportion of students in these subjects on sandwich

courses, which can provide valuable work experience.

Those holding degrees in biological science, the humanities, the social sciences, and those from creative arts degrees have had the highest initial unemployment rates, and were the least likely to be in high level managerial professional or technician jobs.

The IES Annual Graduate Review, 1998-1999: the Key Facts, may be purchased from Grantham Book Services Ltd, tel 01476 541080.

More than half of all managers want to change their jobs

A survey, *The Management Agenda 1999*, carried out by Roffey Park Management Institute, questioned 353 managers on issues affecting their work and their well-being. It found that lack of recognition, increased workloads, poor management and lack of opportunities have prompted 57 per cent of managers to contemplate changing their jobs.

According to the authors, Linda Holbeche and Caroline Glynn, the problem stems from organisations raising their expectations of managers, asking them to do more with less, to develop new skills and to raise the quality of their output.

Roffey Park's Management Agenda provides an annual snapshot of current organisational and managerial issues. To obtain a copy of *The Management Agenda 1999*, call Roffey Park Management Institute on 01293 854038.

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Means before ends

Many things in life puzzle me. I wonder how garden hoses ever learned to tie knots. I can never understand how a well known manufacturer of dog food can produce a product that our dog won't touch. Or how someone could design shoelaces that spontaneously come undone by the sheer act of walking. Or how the day our dustbins are emptied (Mondays) ever gets back in step after a Bank Holiday. Or why deliberately blunting a panel pin prevents it from splitting hardwood beading (or why, for that matter, you can't buy ready-blunted panel pins!). Life is just one puzzle after another.

Another puzzle I frequently wrestle with is about means and ends. While I can accept that most of what we do are means, the 'hows' of life if you like, I still find it mighty difficult to wean myself off placing an undue emphasis on ends. Each week, for example, I get a printout showing sales of publications against targets and I have consciously to remind myself that results are merely a consequence of numerous processes. When the results are disappointing it indicates that we need to improve our processes. Get the processes right and good results will inevitably follow.

I've read all the continuous improvement propaganda urging us to place emphasis on processes rather than on the results of those processes. I also accept that how in the West we tend to be results-orientated with an obsession about productivity, league tables and the 'bottom-line'. I even think I can comprehend what it means to judge processes with results, not solely by results. (Lots of people, incidentally, don't understand this. In a questionnaire I use about con-

tinuous improvement, it attracts more queries than any other item.)

My struggle to stay process-orientated revealed itself again recently when my two sons were on a soccer coaching course. The whole idea was to develop skills, in other words to focus on the 'hows' of playing soccer. However, each coaching session ended with a short match between the different groups where, not surprisingly, from time to time goals were scored. When collecting my boys at the end of the session I invariably watched the last fifteen minutes of the game and it was almost impossible for me not to ask whoever was next to me on the touch line 'What's the score?' I knew that asking this question, or even wanting to ask it, meant that I was placing a greater emphasis on the result than on the skills. My sons succumbed too, of course. All their conversation on the journey home was about the result of the match, and how unfair it was etc, and never about the skills they had learned. The result was all that mattered. Once again, ends had triumphed over means.

The other day, at a conference about the Learning Declaration, the issue reared its head again. We were discussing the fact that the word 'learning' describes both a process and a result, and how easy it is to become preoccupied with results. Systems of accreditation and the like place insufficient emphasis on the 'hows' of learning - including the biggest how of all, learning to learn. Paradoxically, later on that day one of the participants accused me of putting learning on a pedestal and treating it as an end in itself when all the while it is a frightfully important means!

The one consolation is that I know I'm not alone in my tendency to latch on to results at the expense of the processes that bring them about. Teams do it when they become task mesmerised, and fail to invest sufficient time and energy in their processes. Managers do it despite the fact that managing is all about providing people with the means to succeed. I know it's

heresy, but I always think performance-related pay for managers really means process-related pay. It is fine to reward the people who actually achieve the results with bonuses for doing so but, by definition, a manager can only achieve results through other people. So, I'd bonus managers for meeting the three basic needs people have in order to be successful. Everyone needs to know what is expected of them, how they are doing *vis-à-vis* these expectations and how to improve and do even better. It follows, therefore, that key processes for managers are as follows.

- 1 Agreeing with people what is expected of them, so that they are crystal clear about their outputs, levels of responsibility and accountability.
- 2 Providing people with a steady stream of timely, specific and helpful feedback about their performance.
- 3 Coaching people so that they are 'helped to learn from their experiences, good and bad, and have an ongoing plan to improve and develop.

Time and effort invested in these crucial processes is what managers should be rewarded for. The results, as ever, are just the icing on the cake. If you wonder how these processes could be measured, I'd recommend you do it by asking people the following questions.*

- Am I clear about what is expected of me?
- Is my contribution noticed?
- Am I helped to see how I could improve?
- Does what I do make a difference?
- Is this a place where I can learn?
- Is this place open to my influence and ideas?
- Can I trust the people here?
- Does coming here add richness to my life?

An unequivocal 'Yes' to all these is a sure sign that people work for a manager who understands that managing is more about means than ends.

*Adapted from *Managing People is like Herding Cats* by Warren Bennis, published by Kogan Page, 1998

The trainer and knowledge management

Is knowledge management a new concept?

Andrew Mayo thinks not, but he considers it a fundamental issue for trainers and those who help learning in any way.



Andrew Mayo is a consultant, speaker, writer and

facilitator in international HR management, with a specialism in people and organisation development. He worked for nearly 30 years in major international organisations, and now runs Mayo Learning International Ltd, which specialises in organisational strategies for growing human capital. He is also Programme Director for in-company programmes at the London Business School, Visiting Professor of HRM at Middlesex Business School, and a Director of Careers Research Forum. He is the author of *Managing Careers – Strategies for Organisations* (1991); and (with Elizabeth Lank) *The Power of Learning* (1994); *Creating a Training and Development Strategy* (1998), and many articles. He may be contacted on MLI Ltd, tel 01727 843424; fax 01727 759185. e-mail mlt@miltd.com

In no time at all, 'knowledge management' seems to have become the theme of the moment. Many organisations are still struggling with understanding how to achieve a learning organisation in visible and practical terms, so is this new concept just something to do with the IT department or is it something that should concern all those involved in human resource development?

Why knowledge management?

There are three significant driving forces for the current interest in knowledge management.

The first stems directly from the focus on the learning organisation of the last few years. Organisations have realised, that after all they have done to promote individual learning, their greatest difficulty is in the sharing of learning and the knowledge that comes from it, across boundaries and between people. One of the earliest descriptions of a learning organisation comes from Bob Garratt, who ascribed three distinctive characteristics to it, one of which was 'has systems for capturing knowledge and moving it to where it is wanted'.

The restructuring of the 1990s has broken up teams and relationships, and removed staff who co-ordinated centrally and looked after corporate synergy of

knowledge and resources. Much of the knowledge and experience within people is lost when downsizing headcount numbers is the priority. Devolved structures have led to isolationist attitudes, and unshared knowledge and experience. All this has an effect on the bottom line. Many of the resulting costs and inefficiencies are hidden, in the sense that they do not have specific cost accounting lines to themselves. Wasted effort, repeated mistakes, reinvented wheels, duplication – these are everyday drains on the bottom line that arise from the failure to manage the availability of knowledge and experience across the organisation. A crucial part of a true learning organisation, therefore, is a system and a culture for sharing learning.

The second driver comes from the recent realisation that traditional accounting systems for valuing organisations are falling seriously short in an era where knowledge is king. Tom Watson Jr of IBM said many years ago:

'All the value of this company is in its people. If you burned down all our plants, and we just kept our people and our information files, we would soon be as strong as ever. Take away our people and we might never recover.'

Physical or financial assets have always been rigorously measured, but the problem is that other assets have not, and cannot be to the same level of financial accuracy. Thus, relatively, they have had much less attention than they deserve. Yet increasingly the value of companies is significantly exceeding their 'book' value – showing the importance of the intangible assets, often referred to as the intellectual capital of the organisation. Today even capital intensive companies have intellectual assets that are substantially greater than those that are precisely measurable. Companies pay many many multiples of book value to acquire these assets. The 'knowledge assets' of an organisation are a major part – often the most critical part – and how they are managed is a crucial contributor to the growth of value. Today's managements that seek to focus on shareholder value cannot escape from this challenge.

The third driver is technology, which has a power of its own. The most significant recent advance that affects the lives of people and organisations is probably the growth of personal electronic com-

munication, Internet, web and hypertext technologies. The pace of change here is phenomenal. Many of today's commonly used terms were not invented three or four years ago. I have noticed an enormous increase in inter-organisational communication through e-mail in the last year, and in the same time period intranets have grown apace to bring web technology inside the organisation.

What is knowledge management?

The problem to be solved was put very neatly by Lew Platt, CEO of Hewlett Packard (incidentally one of the most sharing cultures in the world) as:

'The problem is that we don't know what we know.'

Knowledge exists in different places, within people and small groups, and is often not made available to others who could use it. People may have access to some *data*, but not to the knowledge and wisdom that comes from accumulated experience in the organisation. Reorganisation, ever prevalent, focuses on new horizons and initiatives and often wipes out the past – if not physically (with the downsizing of people, office removals, IT system changes etc), certainly mentally. Pressure of time, the need for visibility, human impatience, inter-departmental rivalry – these and other familiar features of organisational life, work against a sharing culture.

My suggested definition is this:

'The management of the information, knowledge and experience available to an organisation – its creation, capture, storage, availability and utilisation – in order that organisational activities build on what is already known and extend it further.'

It is not a new concept. Many companies have been managing their knowledge and experience effectively for decades. When I worked in Procter and Gamble 30 years ago, it was a normal process to receive bulletins about experience and innovations from plants around the world. Expected to experiment, managers also had to go through some simple routines of library access first and reporting afterwards. Today, although many such disciplines have been lost, there will be some things happening almost everywhere that are to do with the transfer of knowledge around the organisation. They need to be harnessed and linked and made a part of a whole.

A crucial part of a true learning organisation, is a system and a culture for sharing learning.

Arthur Andersen, who is one of the leaders in providing 'knowledge services', defines knowledge as 'information that adds value'. It may be 'explicit' – openly available, or 'tacit' – embedded within the heads and bodies of people. A 'knowledge management system' will include the following processes:

- Managing the generation of new knowledge through learning.
 - Capturing knowledge and experience.
 - Sharing, collaborating, connecting and communicating.
 - Organising the information for easy access.
 - Using and building on what is known.
- It is immediately apparent that IT does not of itself solve all these problems. Indeed, some well publicised studies of

knowledge management practice during last year made clear that 80 per cent of success is people-dependent. If we think of what is involved in a different way, as in Figure 1, it helps us to ask some key questions.

What?

This is a key design question, and a starting point. It requires the organisation to decide on its 'knowledge architecture' – what kind of data, information and experience is valuable enough to retain and make available? Clearly it will include infrastructure information, product and service information, standard policies and procedures, and indeed all the information that would sit in hard copy reference data. Useful *knowledge*, however, is beyond mere data. It would include lessons learnt from experience, experimentation, projects and customers. We are in great danger of overload, so there is a need to have some guidelines as to what will be useful to others and to have systems for filtering and search. One of the key activities in this area is to identify what are the really strategic 'knowledge assets' and assign the management of these to individuals. Thus Anglian Water created its 'Aqua Universitas', a repository of its knowledge, and assigned managers as 'deans of faculties', taking ownership for an area of water management.

How?

The ability to use information retrieval systems should be fundamental for every employee. However, many readers will empathise with the frustrations experienced with databases, virtual discussion groups, the Internet, search engines, layers of menus, screen reading versus hard copy scanning ... and each can add their own list. Of course, computers are by no means the only way of transfer. Telecommunications are more comprehensive than ever before, and bringing people together physically is still highly desirable, as there is no substitute for human contact and relationships. And it is still the case that some kinds of knowledge are widely stored in hard copy forms. How many organisations used to run internal libraries but have stopped doing so for cost reasons? The knowledge-sharing organisation will probably regard such a facility as an essential investment. It will also organise physical

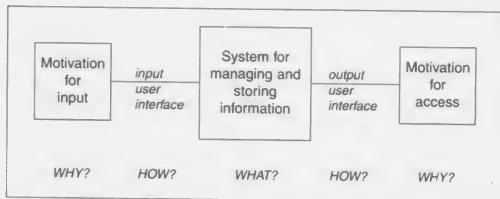


Figure 1. The components of a knowledge management system

space to encourage people to meet and talk. British Airways' startling new headquarters is built very much with this in mind – as people move around they have to cross each other's paths, including the 'Main Street' where there are cafés, shops and facilities. How many buildings do you know where people are shut away in cubby holes?

*The ability to use information
retrieval systems should be
fundamental for every employee.*

Why?

Recall, some fifteen years ago now, working in a large international organisation, with significant dependence on its worldwide technical capability, defining a project on what we today would call knowledge management. It was to capture and make available to all where the special skills, knowledge and experience resided in the world. Not a complex database, probably not more than a page per person with some specialism to offer. I toured the CEOs of the various businesses with this proposal. Every reason was given why it was either unnecessary or would not work. Typical responses were: 'If you don't know something you phone round until you find someone who knows someone who does'; 'It will never be kept up to date'; 'One of those initiatives that has a half life of a few months and ends up in a cupboard'; 'You can't have every Tom, Dick or Harry in the company phoning to anyone to ask for help'... and so on.

Of course, years of experience lay behind some of the comments, reflecting the reality of human nature when it comes to sharing. The motivations for individuals both for *asking* and *giving* may just not be strong enough.

People are motivated to do the things that do not come to them naturally either by an incentive of gain or by a fear of pain if they do not act as required. One might think that accessing a database of knowledge is all gain. Sometime facts have to be searched for, but the willingness to find out what *others* have done and learnt is by no means certain. For some it is a matter of just not being aware that previous learning is available; for others it may be

a question of having the time and patience. Often it is rooted in a sad lack of respect for others in the organisation and what they have done, the 'not-invented-here' (NIH) syndrome, reinforced by believing that a situation is new and special, and one must learn for oneself. This state of mind is not confined to learning from internal colleagues, some business teams show an extraordinary lack of interest in what competitors are doing, or what best external practice has to teach.

The *why* for inputting information and data is about questions of time and discipline, but more fundamentally about 'knowledge is power'. In insecure times people are very conscious that their knowledge and experience are their major personal assets. To be asked to 'dump' their knowledge for others' benefit may not receive the best response. In addition it takes a trustful and blame-free culture for an individual to feel comfortable for logging his or her mistakes into the corporate memory, and yet such experience could be the most critical contributor to corporate learning. On the other hand, people like to publicise what they have achieved, what their special skills are, and what they know a lot about. So one solution here is to change the corporate phone directory into the corporate 'sources of knowledge' directory – publicising the key knowledge, expertise and experience of people for others to access.

The trainer's vital contribution

Most trainers today will acknowledge that they are actually in the learning business, and that this is far more embracing and complex than traditional training events. The latter, at their worst, are isolated from the work environment and pay little attention to the individual learning needs of participants. For those, however, who see themselves as professionals in people development, there are many challenges posed by the need to manage knowledge effectively.

Learning design

Perhaps the most significant change for many is that we cease to see learning as purely an *individual* experience. At the end of an event, good practice traditionally has been to ensure that some action-planning takes place to aid application of the learning. People may be encouraged

to talk to their managers before an event about their learning goals and afterwards about what they learnt. There is nothing amiss with this, but it is insufficient. The *transfer* of learning should be just as important – the simple exercise of thinking about what should be passed on, to whom, how and when.

I may have new knowledge, insights, skills, experiences – so who would also benefit from these? My colleagues? My boss? My work team? Other departments? Some learning is uniquely individual – new attitudes and values and many personal skills. But most can be transferred, if we are motivated to do so and if others are interested to hear it. It has to be *relevant* and *helpful* to them rather than be merely interesting.

Another factor in learning design is making space for sharing the knowledge and experience of participants. It is astonishing that so many events accord all the air time to lecturers, presenters and experts, ignoring (or paying only passing attention to) the richness of knowledge in the delegates. Many trainers like to work with the here and now of a delegate's situation, but this is more than that. If we can see delegates as rich accumulations of knowledge and experience we would want to 'mine' into this for the benefit of all. 'Story-telling' would be a frequently used technique.

The most significant change for

many is that we cease to see

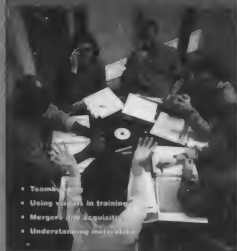
learning as purely an

individual experience.

Induction

Managing the learning curves of new employees – or transferred employees – is perpetually poorly done and should be more than a cursory tour of the department or company. In the knowledge-managed organisation, every person in a new job should build on all that their predecessors have learnt. Not only is the individual predecessor often not available, but also the knowledge and experience they had. Much time is wasted by people struggling to pick up the pieces of a job, only because the situation is not

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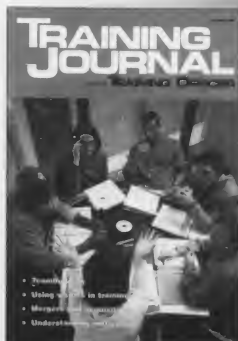
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managed. It has become commonplace to expect change of direction from new appointees, and to have long gaps between job holders. Part of induction should be the capturing of the knowledge and experience of the person into the corporate knowledge bank, to make it available to all. (Most new joiners have unique and useful specialist knowledge and experience that few people ever get to know about.)

Championing and facilitating a learning culture.

Knowledge management is very much dependent on an open, sharing culture, and this is not so common in British organisations. Changing it takes time. HR and HRD should set their own examples but should create a clear vision with senior management of what the desired culture would look like. Such a culture is experimental, blame-free, innovative, empowered, collaborative, mutually respectful, responsive, externally focused, technologically competent in communicating and involves listening to others. HR people would take a lead in looking for learning opportunities; in helping to

set up (and maybe fund) networks that bring communities of common interest together, and in defining and developing learning skills. A particularly useful contribution is with the intakes of young people – helping them not only to master learning competencies, but also bringing them together physically to learn from each other.

However an organisation chooses to play it, human resource development has a critical contribution to make

Building knowledge management skills

Yes, there are some distinctive skills involved in managing knowledge. First, in its acquisition and generation. This embraces creativity and innovation, information retrieval and evaluation, and the recruitment and development of peo-

ple. There are skills involved in living the culture described above that do not come naturally. IT knowledge and skills require training investment. Networking is another competence that is key to this area. I have yet to see a course entitled 'the personal skills of knowledge management', though of course it may exist.

Conclusion

There is a lot to be said for not making knowledge management yet another 'initiative', but for people in various functions to take on board the contribution they can make, such as building on what exists already, identifying gaps and planning to overcome them. However, if one compares the effort that is put into asset management of other kinds to knowledge management, then dedicated resources are warranted as well, such as experts in the 'what', 'how' and 'why'. However an organisation chooses to play it, human resource development has a critical contribution to make, and they can start right now. ■

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Intellectual capital/knowledge has a value

Knowledge management, according to **Nick Cotter** and **Mike** and **Caroline Bagshaw**, is not about managing the head count; it's what's inside those heads that counts.



Nick Cotter



Mike Bagshaw



Caroline Bagshaw

Caroline Bagshaw, Mike Bagshaw and Nick Cotter are the founding Directors of Trans4mation Training Ltd, a company that delivers people management programmes that add value, by combining Mike's psychological know how, with Nick's business leadership experience. Caroline Bagshaw is a freelance training programme writer and author. They may be contacted on tel 0870 606 4400; fax 0870 606 4411; e-mail: Intouch@trans4mation.com

Company value can no longer be assessed solely in terms of tangible assets (property, plant and equipment). The intangibles (know-how, brand and processes) have a huge and increasing impact. Margaret Blair of the Brookings Institute found that in 1982 tangible assets accounted for 62.3 per cent of companies' market value, while in 1992 that figure had gone down to 37.9 per cent. Two companies that illustrate this well are IBM and Microsoft. Although Microsoft has only a fraction of the tangible assets that IBM has (US \$930 million as against US \$16.6 billion in 1996) Microsoft's market value in the same year was higher (US \$85.5 billion as against US \$70.7 billion).

Typically, organisations are unaware of the vast potential that their people have. Furthermore, very little of the knowledge necessary to make the products and deliver services lie in the formal procedures of the company. It is in this context that technology-driven knowledge management systems have been developed. Some of the more sophisticated ones, such as that designed by The Knowledge Exchange, aim to place a financial measure on an organisation's intellectual capital. Critical knowledge (in the form of information, stakeholder relationships, experiences, ideas) resides in the shadow side of an organisation – the informal networks of relationships between employees and stakeholders.

Information alone will not give the advantage, it is the impact of the interactive giving of knowledge and a real will-

ingness to share. Knowledge multiplies when people strive to communicate the whole context of their thinking rather than just the final idea. Multiple perspectives create springboards for lateral thinking. When it works well, it stimulates ideas, projects, partnerships and networks, but trust is essential. Negative feeling kills the process stone dead.

The old formality of hierarchical systems controlling access to resources of all kinds still represents a comfort zone for some people. This goes with the attitude of 'knowledge is power' and, therefore, sharing knowledge is giving up power. With the exponential increase of the knowledge available (far beyond any individual brain) and the flatter structures that make influence so much more important, the informal network of mutual exchange has become the way to move forward.

However, the more enlightened will be aware of Charles Handy's work that shows that 'knowledge power' is only one of seven sources of power, and this source is becoming a very transient form of power when so much knowledge is freely available.

Barriers to organisational learning

Barriers to organisational learning include the following.

- People focus narrowly on their jobs rather than on the purpose of the whole.
- There is an 'us and them' siege mentality. The enemy seen as being 'out there' is, in fact, part of the same system.
- People avoid looking at how they themselves can contribute to their own problems.
- There is too much focus on the short term.

- People fail to notice the subtle changes in the business environment until it is too late.
- People don't systematically analyse and review what they have learned.
- Teams may appear cohesive but they are driven by business limiting 'turf' politics, cliques and defensive behaviours.
- There is a blame culture when things go wrong. 'Who can we point the finger at?' rather than - What we have learned?

These barriers to learning, knowledge creation and sharing abound in today's organisations. However, to confront the more agile competitors, organisations must set free the collective intelligence (creative, analytical and emotional) in a way that aligns individual needs with corporate objectives.

Significant change will always produce resistance. People prefer the familiar even if it is not the best place to be. Moving away from our comfort zone is uncomfortable.

Figure 1 illustrates the knowledge management barometer.

The three legs of the knowledge management stool

Converting learning potential and knowledge of a company into profit requires three main elements.

The environment

First, there needs to be an environment that facilitates knowledge management. This includes technological and structural processes that facilitate the active creation, collation, measurement, and dissemination of knowledge, which can be converted to profit.

The questions the company needs to ask are these.

- Is usable information systematically inventoried, catalogued and stored with the appropriate technology?
- Is knowledge easily accessed and disseminated by everyone in the organisation?
- Is research and development at all levels encouraged?
- Are new ideas actively developed and marketed to provide new sources of revenue?
- Does training provided in IT systems

enable people to acquire, inventory and disseminate the information they need?

- Do the formal and informal reward processes reward knowledge-sharing?
- Are senior managers good role models for knowledge management and sharing?
- Does the physical office/work setting facilitate shared learning and knowledge?
- Are negative politics and institutional silos effectively challenged?
- Is there a clear shared vision, and are values clearly stated, about the effective creation and sharing of knowledge?

Attitude

The environment will support effective knowledge management, but is not sufficient. People also need to have the right attitude.

- Employees need to:
 - Feel confident in approaching people inside and outside the organisation for the knowledge they need.
 - Automatically think who else will ben-

University for Industry

Expressions of Interest to become a Qualified Supplier to the University for Industry for the Provision of Learning Material

Expressions of interest are invited from organisations wishing to become Qualified Suppliers to the University for Industry (Ufi) for the provision of open and distance learning materials.

The Ufi is at the heart of the UK Government's vision for Lifelong Learning. The Ufi has two strategic objectives - to stimulate demand for lifelong learning, and to promote the availability of and access to high quality and innovative learning, particularly through the use of information and communications technologies.

As part of the process for achieving these objectives the Ufi will broker the provision of learning materials:

- by endorsing materials which already meet its learning quality criteria
- by enhancing other materials so that they meet its criteria and then endorsing
- by commissioning the development of new material where there is a lack of suitable provision.

The Ufi criteria are available on our website.

A qualified supplier model will be used for all categories of material. There will be two categories of qualified supplier:

- companies, institutions, organisations or consortia which have (or are developing) material which they wish to offer for endorsement.
- companies, institutions, organisations or consortia which are capable of undertaking the development of material commissioned to a Ufi specification.

All Ufi endorsed material will be made available through a national network of learning centres.

Current priority areas are all levels of: information and communications technologies, basic skills, small and medium sized enterprises (for example in the areas of management development, financial management, marketing, etc.), and the specific sectors of automotive components, multi-media, environmental technology and services, and distributive and retail trades.

Further details, including how to register an interest and the information which Ufi will require, can be found on our website at <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/ufi>.

For queries which cannot be answered by the information on the website please enquire via email at qs.ufi@mcmail.com or by fax on 0114 270 0034.

The deadline for receipt of expressions of interest is 12 April 1999.

- efit from the knowledge they have in order to move the business forward.
- Be prepared to collaborate with others to create new solutions/ knowledge.
 - Be prepared to suspend their assumptions and engage in open dialogue.
 - Believe in the value of giving first, before expecting to receive.
 - Have a mind-set that looks for opportunities for collaborative effort, rather than for obstacles.
 - Believe in their ability to cope with the 'loss' of knowledge when they share it with others.
 - Be committed to lifelong learning.
 - Respect and value their own knowledge and experience as a precious asset that can add value to the business.
 - Genuinely 'care' for people. This means caring enough to say the worst - giving honest feedback and challenging them to be the best they can be.

Skills

Attitude will make all the difference, but people can also develop their skills.

The skills your people will need include the following.

- Time management to use their time and energy effectively for acquiring knowledge (spending all day surfing the net is probably counterproductive).

- Use of different learning techniques to absorb key knowledge and learning quickly.
- Effective skills of advocacy and inquiry to present knowledge to, and gather knowledge from, others.
- Informal networking skills to build your influence to gain access to people with knowledge.
- Resource investigation skills.
- Effective IT skills for recording and disseminating information.
- Skills of co-operative problem-solving.
- Open dialogue skills.
- Flexibility and willingness to try new things and take educated risks.
- Active review of learning from mistakes, risks, opportunities and successes.

The learning organisation

Over and above the relationship between environment, attitude and skills, the organisation needs to develop its capacity to continuously change and renew itself in the face of increasing competition. Senge (1990) sees this as a learning organisation where 'people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together'.

Senge has identified the following five

disciplines, which are essential to a learning organisation.

- **Systems thinking.** This involves seeing the connections between individual elements and the larger system, and how each part interacts with the other.
- **Personal mastery.** This involves taking the initiative and continually deepening and clarifying our personal vision, focusing our energies and seeing reality objectively. It involves taking charge of our own destiny.
- **Team learning.** The collective 'intelligence' of the group is greater than the sum of the parts. People have to communicate at a deeper, more open level for team learning to take effect.
- **Mental models.** We need to continually challenge our own deeply held assumptions that influence how we process information, which in turn affects how we behave.
- **Shared vision.** A vision gives direction and purpose. When all those engaged in the enterprise share the vision, they are more likely to be proactive in taking steps to realise the vision.

Unfortunately, various organisation processes can block the mastery of these disciplines.

Conclusion

The downsizing culture of the 1980s and 90s, and the increase in job insecurity along with the loss of trust, has meant that self-preservation is stronger than ever. There may now be a tendency for individuals to hoard their knowledge and engage in business limiting turf politics. People who were once colleagues may now see each other as competitors for the fewer number of career rungs in the flatter organisation. However, the modern complex organisation will not thrive unless employees have the environment (culture), attitude and skills to share key knowledge.

Making what is in people's heads count rather than managing the head count represents just such an opportunity. ■

Reference

- 1 Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, Doubleday Currency, New York, 1990.

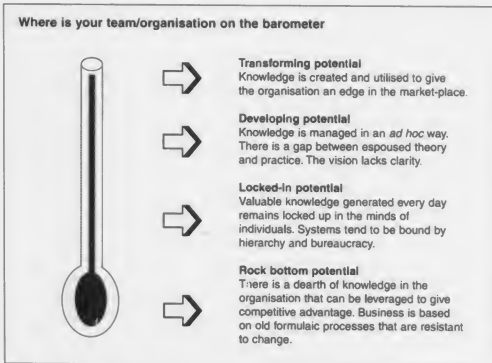


Figure 1. The knowledge management barometer

An appraisal system with real HRD value

Garry Platt describes how Technicolor, a major videotape reproduction and distribution service in the UK, has recently overhauled its appraisal system with the assistance of Woodland Grange. The new system will support its progress and growth, and make a significant contribution to the development and training of all its managers.

The project, which began at the beginning of 1998, had four targets to achieve.

- To support and help achieve the organisation's aims and objectives.
- To be user friendly.
- Not to degenerate into a once-a-year ritual.
- To make significant contribution to the development and training of the managers involved, otherwise what was the point.

The Technicolor HRD team, together with input from Woodland Grange, reviewed current practices within the UK and quickly identified some of the major pitfalls and problems. These problems centre upon the following areas which have been termed Relevance; Calibration; and Analysis.

This article will look at associated difficulties within each of these areas and illustrates how Technicolour has overcome them.

Relevance

In many appraisal systems the appraisee is marked or assessed against a range of factors. The choice and selection of these factors is crucial. These factors must reflect the current demands of the organisation upon staff and must not be a random selection of jingoistic management traits.

Typical appraisal factors include: objectivity, creativity, flexibility, leadership, motivation, analytical ability and planning.

The list is probably endless, but it is imperative that the selection must relate to the needs and direction of the business. The first phase in the development of the Technicolor appraisal system was the isolation of the essential 'Performance Factors' demanded of managers within the organisation. These were identified after speaking to strategic level managers within the company, determining tactical plans and demands upon people over the next two to three years. There were also discussions with end users. This resulted in the following factors being identified as essential to Technicolor's performance in the next five years and hence imperative for its managers to be assessed, trained and supported in these areas.

- Achievement of objectives.
- Knowledge and information about their job.
- Quality of work produced.
- Industry and application.
- Leadership of staff.
- Decision-making.
- Initiative and innovation.
- Attitude and maturity.
- Financial awareness.
- Customer care.

In many appraisal systems the appraisee is marked or assessed against a range of factors.

These 'performance factors' were discussed with various representatives from the end users. The response was extremely positive with refinements and adaptations being discussed and introduced. If the initial analysis is conducted with



Garry Platt is a Senior Consultant at Woodland

Grange and can be contacted on 01926 336621.

some degree of rigour the resulting output should make sense to those people who will be immediately involved with the process. The factors were in fact recognised as highly relevant to the business and were enthusiastically accepted as such throughout the company.

Calibration

The next phase in the development of the appraisal system was the calibration of each of these factors. Calibration is partially about defining what each of these factors means and partially about making sure the system is fair.

The process of calibration defines each of the performance areas in greater detail

For example, the term 'customer care' is an ambiguous one. It means different things to different managers. But if an appraisal system is to be equitable and fair each manager must know what each performance factor is. Therefore calibration is introduced. This is the simple process of ranking performance over a range of seven grades (see Figure 1).

The process of calibration defines each of the performance areas in greater detail and can also contribute to preventing managers seriously over- or under-marking their staff because of the calibrated definition. The assessing managers do have the power at their discretion to mark up or down, but only by a factor of one point against the central calibrations – i.e. 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6.

Some factors can have a different marking range, Quality for instance is such a high factor within Technicolor that 0 marks apply until the above average areas are reached, thus emphasising their commitment to this performance factor and its importance to the business; average will not do in this area.

When the appraisal system is adopted and in use, the assessments from the various departments, units and sections are collected by the HR Department. Here they are processed and analysed. The appraisal system data is then integrated into the development of the organisation's training plans. The process is relatively straightforward.

Customer care

Consider dedication to high quality customer services, effort expended to ensure customer satisfaction, speed of response and manner in dealing with customer queries.

- 7 Customer service is always given top priority, is determined to achieve high standards of service and goes to considerable lengths to ensure complete client satisfaction. Consistently looks for ways to improve client/customer service.
- 5-6 Demonstrates above-average standards of customer care and can be relied upon to respond very effectively to customer/client needs.
- 3-4 Copes adequately with the demands of the customer/client and works to a satisfactory standard with most.
- 1-2 Customer/client satisfactions are not always given enough priority, sometimes shows insufficient interest in maintaining effective customer/client relationships.
- 0 Pays cursory attention to customer services. Is only prepared to put in minimum effort and is slow to attend customer requirements. Can be offhand in customer dealings sometimes giving the customers/clients the impression that they are a nuisance.

N/A Recently appointed and too early to judge.

Figure 1. A calibration for customer care

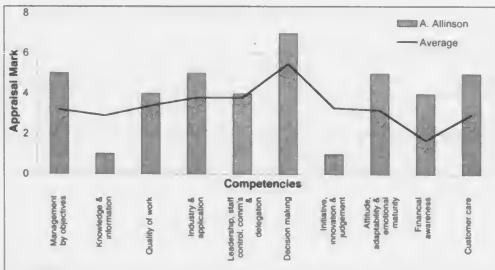


Figure 2. An individual appraisal analysis

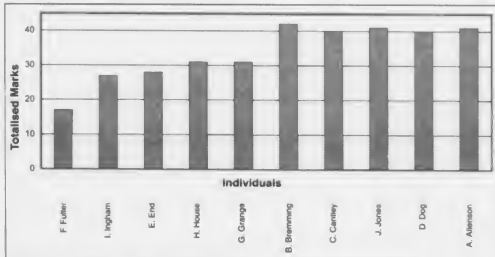


Figure 3. A group comparison chart

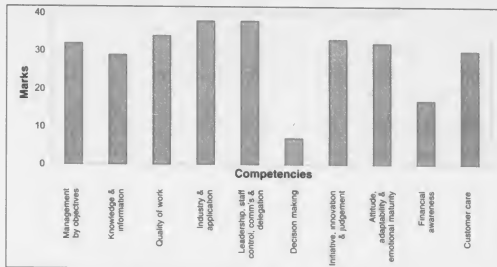


Figure 4. Analysis of a department's strengths and weaknesses

Analysis

Each department, once the appraisals have been completed, submits the completed assessment to the HR Department. The scores are analysed graphically and produce some extremely useful and interesting data.

An individual's profile can indicate where his or her strengths and weaknesses lie (see Figure 2).

In this instance the fictitious individual

performs generally above average when compared to his peer group, with the exception of 'Job Knowledge' and 'Initiative'. These two areas would therefore be where we would focus that person's personal development training plans for the forthcoming twelve months.

A group of individuals can then be addressed and those people with the highest scores potentially being used to train and mentor the weakest-scoring

individuals – those who obviously need the most help (see Figure 3).

An entire department can also be collectively assessed against the key performance factors (see Figure 4).

Here we can review where the organisation might choose to focus its overall training and development budget and plans for the next six to twelve months.

In this fictional example, decision-making and financial awareness need to be addressed. The following year the follow-on profile should show a distinct change if the training and development has impacted upon the areas it is intended to address. Here the appraisal system becomes not only a major contributor to Training Needs Identification but also the evaluation of its impact upon the business – a powerful and useful bi-product of the appraisal system. This data also highlights managers who are ignoring the calibration system and consistently over- or under-mark their staff. In these instances the profiles, when compared with other managers, immediately show these trends. ■

Making Appraisals Work



Woodland Grange provides specific help for people preparing and conducting appraisal interviews.

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In this month's Training Journal you will read that Woodland Grange has extensive experience and knowledge in designing and developing your existing appraisal systems.

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Appraisal and staff development

In the NHS, as in other organisations, the appraisal and development of staff is placed high on the agenda. Here **David Brigden** and **Christopher Botton** discuss the key issues.

For many in education the threat, as it is seen, of appraisal, is a chimera, looming large and foul over our shoulders; for others it is a fantasy that cannot come to pass; and for some it is a practical part of institutional autonomy and individual professionalism. Without appraisal it is difficult to identify strengths, weaknesses and educational needs. Despite this apparently simple logic, appraisal can be difficult to implement effectively, and when done poorly, can be discouraging and demotivating.

Appraisal is now recommended for Specialist Registrars¹ and Pre-Registration House Officers². Good Appraisal systems that are well implemented not only benefit the individual but also the establishment in which they work. According to Lilley³, effective appraisals can clarify:

- the individual's contribution to the organisation
- the individual's training needs
- what is an acceptable standard of behaviour and care
- the expectations of the employing trust.

Keys to success

SCOPME⁴ defines appraisal as a process that is confidential, educational and developmental, and designed to help the individual's progress. It should not be confused with assessment, which is designed to inform decisions about career progress; nor performance review, which is employment-related and designed to measure achievement against the individual's job plan. The key to successful appraisal is focusing on the educational

need and developmental goals of the individual.

Effective appraisals do not only depend on what takes place during the interview itself, but also on what happens before and afterwards. They should be a continual process and an integral part of the organisation's culture. Effective appraisals should therefore:

- identify educational and developmental needs
- be part of day-to-day supervision, support and feedback about performance
- include trainers and trainees in devising, implementing and reviewing the system
- be recognised as separate from assessments conducted for regulatory purposes
- have clear aims
- be properly resourced
- include methods for monitoring participation
- include channels for encouraging and collecting feedback
- be well planned
- be conducted as an integral part of the work environment.

Without appraisal it is difficult to identify strengths, weaknesses and educational needs.



David Brigden



Christopher Botton

David N Brigden is Advisor for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education, Mersey Deanery. Christopher Botton is Lecturer at the Centre for Professional Development and Training in Education, University of Hull.

Basic skills

Undertaking appraisals requires a range of skills and advanced planning. The basic skills needed to carry out effective appraisals relate to feedback that must be constructive. In addition, the ability to listen, support, counsel and ask appropriate questions is essential. Appraisees often need help identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Guiding learners on how to reflect on their learning is one method to

facilitate appraisal. Another method is to follow constructive feedback practices. Constructive feedback should be non-judgmental, specific, directed towards performance rather than personality, checked with the recipient, outcome based, problem-solving and in the form of suggestions rather than prescriptive comments. (See Pendleton⁷ and Silverman *et al.*)

In addition to developing these skills,

*Undertaking appraisals
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advanced planning.*

however, attention needs to be given to the time and place of appraisal. The following is a useful format to follow.

- Arrange a confidential appointment, allowing sufficient time to prepare (not during clinics or ward rounds).
- Prior to the interview, both the appraiser and appraisee should gather information that helps to identify indicators of strength, weaknesses and training needs.
- At the interview the appraiser should try to put the appraisee at ease.
- Agree the objectives of the interview: clarify and agree that current performance is under review; stress that both of you have much to learn.
- Stress the developmental nature of the exercise and show how the interview is of value to both the appraisee and the institution; ask the appraisee to suggest what hopes he/she has for the discussion.

- Ask the appraisee for positive and negative comments – i.e. what things you have done well and what things could be improved.
- Agree outcomes; explain how a summary will be agreed and plans formulated for future needs and development; take notes if you wish.
- Review job description and past performance following the rules of constructive feedback.
- Identify training needs.
- Agree an action plan.
- Ask the appraisee for final comments.
- End on a positive note; thank the appraisee and show appreciation for his/her effort; identify the time for the next appraisal.

Appraisal interviews

The appraisal interview is quite unlike any other interview, because development and improvement as opposed to assessment are the basic tenets. It is usually private and the parties concerned may be bound not to reveal what took place. However, the interviewer must be aware of the 'halo' and 'horn' effects, and not exaggerate a person's strengths and weaknesses. Both appraiser and appraisee must agree on general and specific tasks for the year ahead and these goals should be realistic and attainable. It is important that objectives are neither too trivial nor too idealistic, they reflect an agreed set of criteria, the support machinery is established and the monitoring is ensured.

Nathan⁷ comments on the fact that research indicates the proper follow-up of those already interviewed was seen as more important than interviewing too many people. Most individuals are suffi-

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ciently realistic to realise that many things are beyond the control of management, but frustration quickly builds up when promised action is not taken, especially on issues which are quite easily handled. Staff development heightens expectations but, if agreed action is not forthcoming or even seriously attempted, then the situation can be worse than if the whole exercise had not taken place at all. Appraisal therefore, should be viewed as part of the professional practice. ■

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Training Solutions & the IT Training Show NEC Birmingham 6-8 July 1999

Training Solutions & the IT Training Show will run from 6-8 July at the NEC in Birmingham. Last year some 186 exhibitors showcased their training services and products to nearly 4,000 training professionals. The organisers promise that this year's show will be bigger, busier and more interactive. Key features will include a cyber café, recruitment tunnel, drama-based training, an Internet training zone and a trainer feedback forum. There will also be an opportunity for visitors to take part in a miniature grand prix. One-hour keynote sessions focusing on a range of soft and IT training techniques will take place in four dedicated showcase theatres.

For further information contact the organisers at 32 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SS; tel 0171 233 5054.

Problems with appraisal

As busy managers struggle with the demands of trying to facilitate meaningful and useful appraisal with their teams, **Lesley Myland** looks at how trainers can address some of the common problems with appraisal schemes by designing training to help managers deliver realistic solutions.

Most of the new systems and routines in which businesses invest develop and improve as they mature. As users become confident and experienced, they begin to discover the potential of new ways of doing things and begin to work at them in a spirit of continuous improvement. However, for all the genuine benefits they can offer, the reverse often seems to be true of appraisal schemes. Once the first enthusiasm has been spent, this highly effective way of helping individuals to manage their performance so that organisational need and individual ability remain in harmony, seems somehow to end up on the back burner, a victim of the increasing pressures and uncertainties of the fast-moving modern organisation.

Performance appraisal brings together many other essential people-management functions



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and regularly where strong control mechanisms make managers highly accountable for ensuring that it gets done.

Why then, are so many organisations finding that although their managers appreciate the benefits and genuinely want to facilitate successful and meaningful appraisal, it is often difficult to get them to commit themselves to it in a consistent way? Addressing this issue is obviously a strategic matter, but the role of training in putting across appropriate messages must be considered. Implementing a new or revised appraisal system is almost certainly doomed to failure if the correct emphasis is not placed upon training appraisers. An appraisal training programme will often focus upon the meaning of appraisal and what the organisation aims to achieve from implementing it in terms of primary and secondary benefits. The training might also address the system itself, explaining paperwork and procedures, and probably most importantly of all, it will develop some of the special interpersonal skills required to help appraisers encourage and motivate their appraisees towards agreeing an appropriate plan of action. All these elements are important, but training must also be geared towards addressing some of the problem areas that seem to impede the success and development of some extremely well constructed appraisal schemes.

Negative attitudes and inconsistent commitment

Creating and maintaining consistent commitment to appraisal is not the job of the trainer, although he or she will certainly have a part to play in strengthening the company's message in imparting the aims of the appraisal scheme. In the first instance, support must be clearly expressed by the most senior managers, who must also demonstrate that they are prepared to become personally involved in meeting the demands of the exercise. A

Performance appraisal brings together many other essential people-management functions such as objective-setting, planning, communicating, monitoring, supporting, giving feedback and facilitating operational improvement. It is not an additional responsibility, but a way of focusing upon many aspects of good management practice. Yet it seems that appraisal is often only carried out well

concise statement of policy and intent should make it clear to every employee how the appraisal scheme fits into the context of organisational goals and values, and it must show how resources such as time or training budgets will be allocated in order to validate the appraisal process. The stated objectives of the appraisal scheme must communicate a genuine intention to promote organisational effectiveness through an investment in people.

It can be helpful to commence an appraisal training programme by revisiting aims and benefits

Therefore, a prerequisite for successful training will be that all participants start with a clear understanding of what the appraisal scheme is trying to achieve and what part they will play in making appraisal a meaningful exercise.

It can be helpful to commence an appraisal training programme by revisiting aims and benefits, with an emphasis on how appraisers can prepare to communicate these to their appraisees. Perhaps they can prepare an agenda for a short, team meeting during which they will explain the benefits of appraisal and how it will work in practice. They should also be equipped to anticipate and address their staff's natural concerns and although other aspects of training will help them to do this, some time examining what problems might be encountered will be well spent.

Ensuring objectivity

Most organisations will attempt to convey the standards of performance and behaviour that they require from their employees by communicating them in job descriptions, competency statements, or performance objectives. Accurate assessment can only be achieved if appraisers and appraisees are both very clear about what criteria will be used in determining how strong or weak the performance is. Appraisal that does not have this foundation is likely to be very subjective and devoid of any clear direction for future development. In organisations

where job definitions and clear standards of performance are not well established, it will be necessary to spend time, in any training intervention, reminding trainees how standards are constructed and communicated, and how they can be used to assess performance objectively.

Using time effectively

A lack of time or the pressure of work are usually offered as the main reasons that appraisal falls by the wayside. There is no doubt that useful appraisal is time-consuming and it is difficult to offset this by measuring just how much time is saved in the long run because of heightened motivation, keener skills, good delegation and improved efficiency. There are no short cuts to successful appraisal, so the training issue must be one of how to manage and plan appraisals so that time is used effectively.

The design of the scheme itself needs to be as simple and user-friendly as possible to avoid the perception that the pure mechanics will be time-consuming, let alone the preparation and the interviewing. The correct perspective on paperwork needs to be emphasised. Appraisal is not a paper-based exercise – forms or other documentation should be supporting it, not driving it. The need to spend a great deal of effort in explaining lengthy appraisal forms and complicated assessment tools might be an indication that the design of the appraisal system itself is the main reason why it seems to be such a time-consuming project.

From a training perspective, a carefully constructed case study can often be helpful in showing how planning and preparation, using the support provided by the paperwork, can lay the foundation for an extremely rewarding appraisal meeting.

Preferably written in context for the course participants, this might consist of a random collection of views and assessments relating to a fictional individual's performance. This collection of thoughts should clearly relate to the accountabilities and competencies that are necessary to do the job effectively. If appropriate, some previously agreed objectives might be included, with some details as to how well these have been achieved or otherwise. It can be useful to draw up a fairly strong character in the case study, so that trainees are obliged to consider the matter of cutting through personality issues to maintain objectivity. A red herring or

two concerning matters of conduct such as timekeeping could be included to remind trainees that conduct issues are normally confined to the disciplinary arena and are only discussed as a part of the appraisal process if they genuinely impact upon performance. Perhaps some of the statements and assessments in the text can be made vague or subjective, so that trainees are reminded of the need to be factual and objective when discussing performance. The text should also make a point of including some information concerning incidents that took place at the beginning of the review period, so that trainees are made aware of the importance of considering performance over time, and not merely reviewing the recent past.

There is no doubt that useful appraisal is time-consuming

The outcome of this exercise should be a comprehensive but flexible agenda, which will form the basis of an appraisal discussion. This should assist in ensuring that the appraisal meeting covers relevant ground, is kept under control, and does not waste time and effort. Trainees may find it helpful, when doing a case study like this, to write their agenda as a set of questions relating to the topics they wish to discuss rather than notes summarising their own views. This approach will remind them that modern appraisal is not about delivering judgement, but about helping appraisees to subscribe to a voluntary agenda whereby they will be encouraged to review their own strengths, weaknesses and development potential.

Ensuring a continuous and credible process

It is quite usual for full and relatively formal appraisal meetings to be held only once a year. However, by definition, appraisal is not a 'once-a-year day', but a continuous process whereby managers and their staff share feedback regularly. This may be done formally, but can be as informal as a 'thank you' note for a job well done.

If too much emphasis is placed on the yearly meeting, appraisers and

appraisees often indulge in a build-up, which can make the whole exercise extremely daunting. The task for the appraisal trainer is to focus on how to give constructive feedback in the wider context, rather than focus upon this skill purely in an appraisal interviewing situation. It is acknowledged that there should be no surprises during an appraisal meeting, but if appraisers are only taught to facilitate feedback within that framework, it is quite likely that they will overlook the need to recognise good performance or address poor performance on an ongoing basis.

*Appraisal is not a paper-based
exercise – forms or other
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supporting it, not driving it.*

Interim feedback sessions may be shorter and more informal than a full appraisal, but many of the same skills will be needed. It will also become evident that the yearly meeting will be a much easier task if it is viewed as a summary of many other constructive meetings, and a starting point for future development.

The other aspect of continuous and credible appraisal is, of course, how any follow-up is conducted. When preparing development plans with appraisees, it is always necessary to identify specific actions or objectives that have a time frame built into them. This is so that it is possible to review progress by way of some measurable outcomes within a reasonable period. This 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Timebound) approach to development planning can be problematical for some appraisers to embrace. Practical work, based on case studies or role-plays, concluded with some written-up development plans, should ensure that trainees do not send their future appraisees out of appraisal meetings with nothing more than vague exhortations.

In acknowledging that appraisal is a continuous process, trainees will need to understand the requirement to schedule informal meetings with appraisees, to be

held at intervals in the months after the appraisal meeting itself. Objectives or other action plans can then be reviewed, and any ongoing performance issues can also be discussed. This routine will make appraisal a genuinely continuous process, serving to validate it and build its credibility.

Approaching appraisal meetings with confidence

There are a number of communication issues that can pose quite a challenge to the appraising manager's range of interpersonal skills. The implied power dynamics in an appraisal situation can often be quite destructive. Where authority or hierarchy are cornerstones of the organisation's culture, it can be very difficult to create an informal enough atmosphere to generate honest communication and feedback.

Appraisers may also have natural concerns about maintaining objectivity and creating a level playing field so that all appraisees will receive consistent treatment and equal opportunity. This is particularly important if there is to be any link between performance and pay.

If appraisees have a particularly strong or aggressive nature, keeping the appraisal on track can be difficult. It can be just as difficult to appraise sensitive or submissive individuals who might be mortified by any hint of negative feedback. Some appraisees will just not participate in a meeting; others will regard it as an excellent opportunity to air grievances and little more.

Clearly, good planning will overcome some of these problems, and many communication issues can be addressed by the preparation already outlined.

However, in a training context, the most effective way to develop the interpersonal skills that will help appraisers to overcome typical communication problems is to provide plenty of practical experience, usually through the use of role-play.

Role-plays are almost universally unpopular with trainees, although most will grudgingly admit that they do gain something from practising new skills in a safe environment.

The impact of role-plays will be heightened if they are planned carefully and conducted with a degree of sensitivity to the trainees' inevitable feelings of self-consciousness or discomfort. One of the

keys to making role-plays work is to ensure that the scale of them relates to the length of the entire training course. It takes time to relax and equip trainees sufficiently for them to be able to undertake a full-scale videotaped interview, which will then be reviewed by the whole group. Ideally, any role-plays undertaken during shorter courses or at the earlier stages of more in-depth ones will be done in a more private setting, and with 'cameo' cases which are shorter and do not demand too much preparation.

*From a training perspective,
a carefully constructed case study
can often be helpful*

In a successful role-play, the emphasis will be on developing skills, not on testing participants or demanding fantastic feats of memory and acting prowess. Case studies must be thorough and as relevant in terms of trainees' requirements as possible. Hypothetical or off-the-shelf cases will need to be thoughtfully adapted. Participants' briefing and preparation time must be sufficient to enable them to re-create a realistic scenario. It can be very useful to encourage trainees to develop their own role-play material, using authentic cases and reconstructing either real or possible situations. Clearly, trainees must agree to maintain confidentiality if this approach is used, but it can obviate the perennial problem of role-plays 'not being like the real thing'.

Finally, it is vital that any role-play is followed by review and feedback, and hopefully a second role-play to capitalise on learning points. This is an excellent opportunity for the trainer to offer his or her own practical demonstration of the appraisal principle that constructive feedback should facilitate improved performance. ■

Flexible working: getting from policy to practice

If flexible working is the way forward, why is there seemingly so much resistance to it? In exploring this issue **Penny de Valk** looks at the business case for flexible working and explains how to ensure that it delivers on its promise.

There has never been more talk in human resource circles about the importance of flexibility. Business wants it, workers want it, yet good practice and the widespread use of flexible working across organisations remain difficult to find. In this article we look at why that is the case – i.e. why we want flexibility so much and what the challenges are to making it work well. When we talk about flexible working in this context we are talking about flexible work options such as reduced hours, job-sharing, flexi-time, teleworking, remote working and compressed work weeks.

Dual revolutions

The context within which we work needs to be our starting place because something very important is happening that requires us to think differently about work. This sea change can be understood by recognising that there are dual revolutions occurring currently in both business and the workforce and these revolutions are driving our desire, and the requirement, to work differently.

The business revolution needs no introduction to anyone who has been in an organisation for the last five to ten years. Business is experiencing deregulation of markets including the labour market,

increased competition, globalisation, the impact of technology, and the growth of consumerism driving ever greater demands for quality and service. At the same time, the revolution in the workforce sees us experiencing an increase of women in the workforce, dual income partnerships, an ageing population that will increasingly see employees with elder care and childcare commitments, and a younger generation with very different expectations about the quality of their working life.

Recent research¹ found that only 4 in 10 of the 6,000 managers surveyed believed their lives were in balance. By far the majority had made important sacrifices for their careers and most believed that working long hours was mistaken for commitment in their organisation. The bigger the company the more prevalent the long hours culture. The sacrifices people made were largely to do with missing out on time with their children and their families. The top five wish list included working fewer hours, changing the company culture, avoiding commuting, working flexibly and working at home – all of which describe a desire for people to have more control over where and when they work.

These changes in the workforce have been accompanied by a change in employees' attitudes towards work. Today's workers are less willing to sacrifice their personal lives for their employers. It is more common today for workers to turn down relocation offers, even offers of advancement, for personal and family reasons. Workers are also putting more weight on work/life balance as they evaluate their employers.



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The importance of a loyal productive workforce is key to the success of many of the change efforts in business today but is something we are struggling to recapture. A 1997 Institute of Management survey noted that 'change management has generally not had its intended consequences, while the blind pursuit of headcount reduction has adversely affected morale and perceptions of job security'. Research undertaken by ISR on employee satisfaction notes that feelings of job satisfaction and company identification among UK employees are lower than in almost every other European country.

The 1998 International Workforce Management Study surveyed 10,000 workers in the USA, Japan, Russia and ten European countries and found that 64 per cent would leave their jobs for advancement opportunity, a 10 per cent salary increase and/or flexible hours. Although good pay was among the top five most desired attribute in a job, the need for balance was valued higher everywhere except in Russia.

The business case

Companies once dismissed these issues. They were not seen as legitimate business concerns. Today that view can be costly. Work has changed, and so has the workforce. Not only are employees called upon to do more at work – with higher quality standards, accelerated schedules, and less job security – they are also doing more at home. The increase of women in the workforce has had a cascading effect at work and at home. More mothers with young children now work and need child care support. Fewer men have wives at home to take care of the family. When older relatives need help, it is harder for everyone to find the time to contribute. Working couples have more difficulty dealing with school issues and when pressures are felt from home and family, work can suffer. When childcare arrangements break down, employees miss work. When employees are worried or distracted, their productivity drops. And when the pressure becomes too great, employees leave.

Since the 1980s, forward-thinking companies have been working to update benefits and work practices to better meet the realities of the changing workforce. The first efforts focused on childcare and elder care supports, since it was clear that an employee who needed childcare, or

whose ageing father needed attention, couldn't get to work. Increasingly, flexible working is being seen as the powerful tool for meeting the needs of today's workforce ensuring the broadest base of beneficiaries.

How can companies expect employees to give their full initiative to an organisation that can no longer offer job security or the promise of long-term rewards? To be engaged in and be focused on their work in the midst of constant change? This is the business challenge of the next century, and the companies that address these questions successfully will be the winners in the years ahead. Offering flexible working in a consistent and equitable way will feature as a key source of competitive advantage for these companies.

Organisations have already made their requirements clear to employees: the premium is now on flexibility, adaptability, new skills for new technologies and constant improvement. However, they are having more difficulty responding to what employees need from them in return: the freedom and responsibility to do their work well, and the recognition that they have lives outside of work. It is when companies approach flexible working from this perspective that they have the breakthroughs. Recognising that flexible working is a tool that is good for business and good for people, makes it a classic win-win for those organisations who have been playing a zero sum game for many years with their people, and whose staff are mistrustful and cynical as a result.

How to make it work

But how to do this? There are a number of reasons why flexible working doesn't deliver on the promise, why policies remain in managers' bottom drawers under lock and key, and why their use is not widespread. The first is that most flexible working policies have been positioned in the organisation as an accommodation to women with children. With the very best of intentions, organisations have ensured that flexible working will stay in the margins, will be seen as inequitable and won't be touched by anyone who isn't a mother with a child.

Management resistance is another major obstacle. Managers fears that flexible working means they will lose control, and have to be dispelled in both the design of the system and the roll out of the programme. Employees' major fear is

the career inhibiting impact of flexible working. 'If I get off this career track which is a Monday-to-Friday full-time one, I will never get back on.' A process for ensuring that flexible workers' career development is integrated into their new work pattern is critical.

Then there are the systems within organisations that are simply hostile to flexible working, such as a long-hours culture or head count. If managers are being measured on total head count, as opposed to full-time equivalent headcount, they will resist considering job-shares or part-time working. Flexible working will always challenge the notion that the longer someone is at work the more superior their performance will be.

As well, at the heart of the lack of widespread use of flexible working is the lack of clarity organisations have around *why* they are doing it. If flexible working is not a key part of an organisation's strategy, then it will quickly get waylaid. And finally, flexible working fails so often because there is simply an inadequate process – there is no consistent, universally accessible framework. So 'deals' are done on an *ad hoc* and informal basis, usually focusing on the reason for the change in work pattern and rarely on the benefit to the business. The result is that you go into most organisations and ask 'How do you get flexibility in this company?' and the answer is invariably 'If you've got a good manager' or 'If you are lucky'. If in the next breath you ask 'Is it fair?' the answer is usually 'No'. Organisations that position flexible working as an accommodation, a benefit or an entitlement will ensure flexible working stays in the margins and is seen as inequitable. It will therefore not be able to be used to lever the kind of change that organisations need to embark on today.

Flexible working, when positioned in the organisation as a business-based problem-solving tool will have a greater chance of thriving as it is not a system working against itself. It gets managers and staff to think about the work, not about why someone wants flexible working, but what will the impact be and how will the work get done? The person requesting flexible working should be required to think through the impact on colleagues and customers, as well as the impact on their manager. Systems that are

Continued on page 25

The future for trainers

What does the future hold for me? You have experienced significant changes in the training and development field over the last few years. But where is it all going? What opportunities are open to me? Are my skills and experience still valued? Here, **Tim Ray** explores three key themes of the new world: convergence, being an intermediary and the theme of one. It challenges you to re-evaluate your role.

When I was younger and going to school, I learnt about old civilisations, the industrial revolution and the invention of the steam engine. I heard French nouns and verbs, spoken and taught in the ways they had been when my brother, and probably my father, were at school. As I grew older and went to university, I saw professors and lecturers using books and documents that were twenty years old. Only later, when I worked for a while in a university, did I meet people who inhabited a different world.

Today I live in a digital world, which is having a profound effect on the way I work and play. It's caused me to rethink some of my assumptions about work and society. The digital world is actually changing the way I think. The purpose of this article is not to expound the virtue and value of technology in training; I want you to take far more than that. I want you to consider your history as a trainer and in training because I believe there are great challenges and opportunities ahead. You need to prepare. If at this point you decide to continue reading, the reflection and pause for thought will be well worth it.

One of my assumptions is that you also live in a digital world. A world where every aspect of human endeavour is influenced, supported by or dependent on digital computer technology. There are some key themes in the digital world which are vitally relevant to the world of training.

Convergence

In the digital world, telephony, computing and content creation are converging. The industries and companies involved are converging. The equipment you have on your desk is converging ... into one piece of equipment. Think about it.

You used to have a fax machine, a modem connected to your computer, a separate video player/recorder, a telephone. Now you have all these in one piece of equipment, the latest PC - and it's probably even portable, which gives you access from anywhere.

The companies involved in these industry sectors are merging. Yes, but what does this mean for training? How is your company organised? Does it have a marketing department (content creators)? Does it have an IT department (computing)? Does it have a telephone network (telephony)? Does it have a digital telephone network (telephony/computing)? If large enough it may have people responsible for internal communication (content). And training is a content creator as well.

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My prediction is that these areas will be forced to work more closely together (hurrah!) because they will all want to use the same converging technology to reach their target groups.

This means that areas of duplication and overlap between internal communications, training, marketing, IT and others will be easily identifiable and no longer tolerated. Trainers are frequently involved in internal communication and marketing initiatives.

Intermediaries

The next theme of the digital world is the removal of people who are intermediaries in processes - particularly communication processes. This means that if you



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spend most of your time passing information from one person to another, this part of your role will reduce significantly.

I can handle my own messages using voice mail, my e-mail can automatically reply to you if I am on holiday, I can dictate a message using a telephone and the content will be e-mailed to where I want it to go.

In the old and ancient worlds of training, trainers spent a lot of time passing on information (content) to others. Hence the importance attached to good presentation skills.

In the new digital world, there is less call for a human intermediary, because I can get the information directly to the person who requires it. You can argue that the rise of computer-based training and distance learning in the late 1980s and early 90s was the first step in removing the human trainer from the process of information passing. This trend is accelerating, driven by more powerful and versatile technology. Which leads us on to the next theme ...

One copy

The theme of one. In the digital world you now have one copy of information accessible from anywhere at any time. This really interests businesses because of immediate cost savings on reproducing copies in whatever media.

So the information or content elements of training can be accessed far more easily by the individual from wherever they are – and, of course, far more quickly updated. This challenges the way training content is designed and developed, the expectations of timescales for developing content. The trainer is therefore no longer the guardian allowing access to the information needed. The way the content of training is delivered is changing.

The ancient world

At school, I had a timetable of lessons. When I started to work in training I discovered that there were menus of courses, often timetabled for a whole year in advance, and that trainers had a diary that was fully booked with running courses. From one year to the next, the courses didn't seem to change. I also discovered that people frequently didn't turn up for courses, and some arrived unclear about why they were there. Much time and effort was spent filling the spaces on the course. I also noticed that

when a customer had a critical business project to implement it was hard for training to find resources to support it. This now seems like an ancient world – a course world.

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But course world was forced to change. The operational side of companies become more effective, and competition develops a strong and true customer focus. Suddenly, the customers for training revolted and said: 'Your courses are too long, in the wrong place, cost too much, don't meet my needs, don't help me with change'. Our customers for training expected the same customer focus from trainers. 'Meet my needs, not your needs', was the cry. And so the course world evolved into systematic world.

Systematic world

You may recognise the characteristic features of systematic world.

This is the adoption of a project-based approach, with clearly defined stages of analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Some trainers suddenly became project managers, designers of learning and relationship or account managers. People talk about performance and learning instead of training and courses.

Training projects have sponsors or customers; a wider range of methods and media are used, for example workbooks and computer-based training. And so, the issue of evaluation arises, because 'bums on seats' is no longer a good measure in systematic world.

Some trainers become performance analysts and challenge and develop a

customer's thinking. For them evaluation is easier because they are working more closely with the business and set clear, performance-related objectives with the customer at the start. Training no longer simply takes the order and delivers the course; it focuses on people and performance, proposes a wider range of solutions, educates the customer in the best way to use training and leaves the accountability for performance with the operational customer.

By now I hope you have recognised some of the descriptions of the ancient, systematic and new worlds of training. In my experience most organisations have characteristics of all worlds. The journey from course world to digital world illustrates that the role of 'the trainer' has always been evolving and simply continues to do so. Where are you on this journey – in the way you think, in the work that you are doing, in the results you are achieving?

But what does the future hold? There are real opportunities coming up as long as you are prepared to challenge your own assumptions about the way the world works. First, however, a word of warning.

If you are using a course world philosophy and your organisation is moving you into the digital world, you'll simply end up with a menu of courses on the screen. You won't be exploiting the full benefits. If your customer is happy, fine. But don't be complacent, because they will not be happy for ever.

If you find that you have moved training from trainer-led to distance learning / computer-based in the past and you are now thinking: 'I'll put it on the intranet', think again. It's an obvious first step, but what next? Are you changing the way you think about design and development of learning? Would your customer prefer performance support tools for front line staff? (A convergence of learning and IT.)

The new world

You will experience the decline in the amount of trainer-led work, and a reduction in the number of people involved in administering training. You will experience an explosion in the opportunities available to you. Your role widens into areas of project management and design, internal consultancy and occupational psychology. As the trainer as communica-

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tor declines, so the trainer as problem solver becomes a developer of individuals and teams, and transforms their performance. Don't just tell them how to do it, do it with them. The choice is yours.

You will experience the decline in the amount of trainer-led work, and a reduction in the number of people involved in administering training.

So technology doesn't really matter then? The technology of the digital world is an enabling tool to release you allowing you to focus on the things that make the real difference — people and how they interrelate and work together; something that you already know much about.

If you're not excited by that, then perhaps the content-related areas are of more interest. How do you develop solutions that help people learn and do the job at the same time? How do you harness the theme of one copy to the real advantage of all involved?

Or perhaps you want to be a stand-up trainer, communicating quickly and effectively with groups of people. Don't worry, there will still be work of this kind — but only for the best and it may not be called training and you may not be

employed in the way you are at the moment ... which links to the new world of work.

How do you think about work? 'This company employs me' or 'I choose to sell my services to this company'. Which way of thinking gives you most power and control over your future? It's worth thinking about because one of the biggest myths of the current age is that companies and organisations really want to employ more people. They actually want to employ as few people as they can. Hence, the enthusiasm for the concept of outsourcing. Varying elements of the training value chain will continue to be sub-contracted and outsourced. With the right view, this won't be a problem to you.

The challenge for all of us is to embrace the digital world, continue our personal development and think differently — think digitally, not industrially.

The people I mentioned earlier who I met and who are different, recognised that the subjects they dealt with change every year and that the lectures they give need to be up to date. These people were clever enough to tease out the key principles, which never change, and deliver these in the best way for each group they worked with.

To deal with the ever-changing content, they integrated the process into the way they worked so that they could quickly produce a set of relevant, accurate materials whenever they were needed.

processes, through to poor communication and poor planning. That is the bad news and the good news. It means that there will be challenging cultural barriers to having flexible working embraced if you have a preponderance of weak managers and poor processes, but it also indicates that flexible working can truly be a lever for change when it is integrated with other development and human resource initiatives. Managers, however, must be given the policies, guidelines and tools to help them make business decisions about how work is undertaken and how performance is evaluated.

The business benefits of flexible working are widespread and well proven. They include increased quality and productivity, decreased absenteeism, increased retention, increased ability to recruit from a wider pool of talent as well as employees' increased commitment to

The challenge for all of us is to embrace the digital world, continue our personal development and think differently — think digitally, not industrially.

For some of these people, this was easy. They accepted that they worked in a fast-moving field where they had to keep themselves up to date. And they were responsible for their performance. Some found it a chore, having to create new materials so frequently. They felt that they had achieved their position and that was the end of their road. If you believe that you are at the end of the road, you can only turn back. If you believe that the road rolls on across the horizon, you can keep on journeying and find your way. ■

Note

Tim is keen to know what readers think and feel about these issues. You can contact him via: tim@actconsult.co.uk, or tel 01142 780798.

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Continued from page 22

voluntary and staff initiated have the greatest power. Managers and employees should be able to have adult conversations about how work can be done differently and not have managers put in the situation of having to decide whether Mary's two year old is more important than John's ill mother. Who cares if someone wants to work compressed hours because they want to spend a day a week on their stamp collection? How can we ever train managers to hold consistent values about how people live their lives? Take the subjectivity out of it and have people talk about the business.

At the same time we need to realise that flexible working highlights all of the poor management practice in an organisation — from poor performance management

business goals. Designed and implemented well, flexible working can recharge an organisation's highest performers and focus efforts on the most productive work. At the heart of the new employer-employee contract flexible working can be a change in the relationship on both sides and can be a revolutionary shift in the way work gets done. It means giving employees more control over their work and offers business a powerful tool to differentiate itself, offering a real source of competitive advantage. ■

Reference

- 1 Ceridian Performance Partners and Management Today, *The Great Work/Life Debate*, 1998.

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NETcheck

a personal view of the Internet by Clare Forrest

In the interests of research, Claire recently posted a message to UK-HRD asking: 'What sort of web sites interest you?' 'What ideas do you continually research?' and 'How do you like your sites to look.' Here are the results of the survey, together with her latest reports of discoveries on the web. Clare's e-mail address is cforrest@bigfoot.com

Special thanks this month to those who replied to my request on UK-HRD for information about what it is users like and dislike when surfing. What quickly became evident from this, admittedly very unscientific, survey is that views about what works – and what doesn't – are pretty universal. So, with particular thanks to Roger Greenaway of Reviewing Skills Training, whose contribution I have shamelessly lifted; to Douglas Miller of Melrose, Alan Wise of Racial Telecom; and to my old mate Cecilia Bingham here is a round up of what you think.

You are interested in web sites with:

- Quick loading for each page.
- Good indexes that are easy to navigate.
- Pages with well-organised links that indicate the quality of the sites they link to.
- Opinions or reviews about the value of other sites or training resources.
- A newsletter or a moderated discussion list.
- Free advice.
- A human face where you can readily contact the author(s) rather than just the web designer.

And you like them to:

- look clean, smart and simple
- be easy on the eye

- have plenty of hyperlinks between pages.

What drives you crazy then?

- Anything that makes reading difficult – i.e. almost all background images, text that stretches right across the screen, almost any colour scheme that is not black type on a white or pale background.
- Downloads that don't work.
- Pages that don't use title tags and that appear as 'untitled'.
- Old, outdated pages that haven't been removed or updated.
- Sites which are 'under construction' and that don't offer to e-mail you when the site is up and running.
- University databases that are inaccessible unless you work in higher education.
- Sites, particularly training suppliers, which only give you 'blurb' without the detail really wanted, for example, course dates, programme content, trainers' cvs.

But perhaps the last word should go Doug Miller who says: 'Most training web sites are dull in my view.' Hmm. I suspect that many of us would agree ... let's see what Melrose can do to change this.

Roger Greenaway has his own web site at www.reviewing.co.uk so, in the interests of seeing if he manages to meet his own standards, I visited it.

And I'm very glad I did. This rates as one of the best training sites I've ever seen and it certainly isn't boring. The site covers everything facilitators could possibly want to know about Reviewing Skills Training. It is much more than just a puff for his own business. Roger has put together a site that is genuinely useful, exceptionally easy to load and navigate and has its own search engine. But the real joy of this site is in the detail. For example, on the page of learning links Roger provides more than just the URLs; he also tells you how to subscribe to various discussion groups. And the whole site is full of useful tips to help you find your way around. Definitely one to bookmark.

A site that has potential but is rather dull at the moment is <http://www.hnetwork.co.uk/index.html>. This is the HRNetwork (sic), which describes itself as the site for Human Resource, Personnel, Training, Recruitment and Health and Safety Professionals ... which must cover all of us I think. The button bar on the left, used to navigate the site, is extremely difficult to read, in that it has pale pink type on a pale blue background. Admittedly, the pink does turn blue as your mouse skates down it but it is still hard to read because the type is small. And... picky I know... the apostrophe is missing from the link to the 'Tomorrow's Workforce' survey.

However this survey, *Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce* (which was conducted during 1998 with the aim of contributing to the understanding of the pattern of Human Resources Development in the United Kingdom today) is rather interesting and certainly worth reading.

Something unusually, if you want to visit the forums on the site you must subscribe

before you can see what you're getting and decide if you want to join. I declined to complete the form, so I'm afraid I can't comment on the usefulness of this part of the site. However, the rest of the site seems practical enough and, although a little sparse at the moment in terms of content, I suspect that it will eventually meet its declared aim of providing 'relevant and up-to-date HR information; regular reviews of new products and services; access to quality suppliers; and the opportunity to network with other HR Specialists'. One to keep an eye on.

My final visit this month was to <http://www.ewriteonline.com/articles/journal.html>. This fascinating little site is the brainchild of business partners Leslie O'Flahavan and Marilynne Rudick who are convinced that e-mail is actually a 'new form of writing, with its own requirements and constraints'. This is a US-based site but has some good things to say about writing generally and e-mail in particular. There is a short exercise available to do which asks you to take a typical e-mail and spot the errors. Answers are, thankfully, provided. Since e-mail is a massive topic for many companies at the moment, both in terms of time management and in terms of efficacy, I would suggest that this is a good place to start if your business is experiencing problems. They supply an e-mail newsletter, too – current topic is 'Four Fatal Errors of Web Writing – or – How to Keep Your Content from Crashing!'

Thanks to all those who sent me their ideas this month ... please keep them coming in. Let me know of training-related sites you have enjoyed – or otherwise – and the subjects that you are particularly interested in.

WHAT'S NEW

Here's a quick round-up of recently released training resources. In addition to details of video- and text-based training packs, we have also listed audio, CBT, CD-ROM, intranet and Internet programmes, along with open courses.

Appraisal

McKenzie Human Resources (0181 780 0606) is running a series of two-day open training courses on appraisals during 1999. The course looks at who we need to appraise, when appraisals should take place, who benefits from appraisals, objective-setting, identifying training and development needs and the appraisal interview.

Spearhead Training is offering a one-day course on *Appraisal Skills*. The programme is particularly suitable for all levels of managers and supervisors who are responsible for conducting staff appraisal discussions. The next course takes place in London in May. Further details are available on 01295 250010.

Changing attitudes to work

A new video based programme *Fish!* from Melrose (0171 627 8404) shows companies how to become more effective by adopting positive attitudes and having more fun at work. Set in Seattle's Pike Place Fish market, the video shows how this traditionally dull, unexciting environment has been transformed into a vibrant workplace, and how its employees have benefited from this new approach. The video aims to show how to improve the energy and morale of staff, stimulate creativity, innovation and teamwork, and help everyone become more responsible for decision-making, without tak-

ing themselves too seriously. The programme includes a Facilitator's Guide and a workbook for course participants.

Cutting recruitment costs and improving staff retention

Appointments made purely on the basis of interviews have only a 1 in 9 chance of success. Recruitment tools such as tests and questionnaires increase the success rate by a factor of 6. Yet traditionally, small- and medium-sized companies have viewed tests and questionnaires as too sophisticated and expensive. *DecisionMaker*, by SHL UK (0181 398 4170) lets technology take the strain to help recruit and select the best people for a job or promotion. The employer selects the competencies for a job on the computer, which then selects the appropriate tests, administers them and produces reports. These reports provide a candidate profile against the job, highlights potential risks, places candidates in order of merit and recommends interview questions to probe potential problem areas. *DecisionMaker* makes it possible to use a thorough job analysis and recruit the right person based on the skills needed for the job, quickly, efficiently and cost effectively.

Environment information

Don't forget the environment from the Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) is a guide for incorporating environmental assessment into projects; it explains how managers can integrate planning with pollution control in their project development programmes. The guide is concerned with the requirements of a project 'from cradle to grave' and provides advice, checklists, illustrative tables,



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The Learning Plan Interview

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Drama video (21 minutes), Trigger video
(20 minutes), User's guide
£875 to purchase, £140 for 2 day hire



The Learning Review Interview

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diagrams, charts and worked examples. Further information is available on 01788 578214.

Foreign language training for front line personnel

Language training in the UK has generally been limited to managers, overlooking front line personnel who are often likely to speak with people from other countries on a regular basis. Babel Language & Cultural Consultants (0181 295 5877) is launching a new two-day training programme at HRD Week 1999. Focusing on foreign language telephone skills, the course covers everyday functions such as making calls and getting through to the right person; taking and leaving messages; and arranging international conferences and business travel. The programmes will be delivered on a variety of levels, from beginners to advanced. Each is designed to meet the participants' specific requirements, with vocabulary and role-play situations relevant to their working needs. Cultural differences likely to cause misunderstandings in communication will also be examined. These include degrees of formality and correct forms of address, compliments and making complaints.

Government's national child care strategy

The National Extension College (NEC) and The Kids' Clubs Network (KCN) have developed a new training resource for the qualification Playwork N/SVQ Level 2 - *The Playcare Pack*. Developed for playworkers working towards their Level 2 N/SVQ in Playwork through out-of-school clubs, *The Playcare Pack* contains seven modules covering all the N/SVQ units covering: relationships with children, parents and carers; preparing for children's play;

development through play; accidents and emergencies; teamwork; and improving your knowledge, skills and competence. Further information is available on 01223 450213.

Health & safety law

London-based Quorum Training is offering a range of public *Health & Safety Law* courses, which are intended for accountants, finance managers, lawyers, company directors, company secretaries and their staff. These include *Introduction to Health and Safety at Work*; *Are Offices Dangerous Places?* *Serving the Public*; *Organisational and Management Liability*; and *What to do with your Risk Assessment*. For further details tel 0171 388 2044 or e-mail courses@quorumtraining.co.uk

Internet-based distance learning

The Chartered Institute of Marketing's (CIM) *Marketing Planning Internet* seminar is a fully interactive distance learning course that gives users the opportunity to make continuous e-mail contact with the course director, thus enabling individual support whenever necessary. The course includes examples of how and where key techniques are applied by leading marketers, together with self-tests at the end of key sections. Pro form documents, which are downloaded from the web site, can be used to create plans. The course structure includes a full overview, from positioning marketing to competitive positioning and action planning. Further information is available on 0171 405 4767.

IT skills

SanScrip® (01785 224600) has announced the new *Advanced Microsoft Excel 97 Course* with

versions for Windows 95 and NT4. This is an addition to the company's range of courseware, which includes *Introduction to Word 97*, *Excel 97*, *Powerpoint 97* and *Advanced Word 97*. The design of the courseware allows trainers to use any delivery style to support the needs of the learners - group front-led with demonstration and practice, group self-paced 'pick and mix' workshop style, one-to-one coaching or trainer-supported distance learning. The courseware is not a simulation. All learners use the live PC Application or Operating System.

IT skills and assessment management

Learning Tree International (01372 364600) has launched *SkillsTree*, an IT skills and assessment management tool, which covers over 100 of the most common IT job roles, with detailed definitions of more than 1,000 associated skills. Each employee's skills are compared with the optimum requirement set out in the system's competency model for that job. The tool produces a full organisational skills inventory, giving companies a systematic view of their strengths and weaknesses across all IT job functions from individual, departmental and enterprise-wide perspectives. It enables companies to identify personnel with unique skill combinations and help them build better multi-skilled project teams to meet the most frequent requirements. It can also unearth valuable hidden skills resources, completely unrelated to an individual's main job function.

Leadership and motivation

CBi/Real Business Courses is offering a one-day course on *Leadership and Motivation*.

The course aims to show delegates how to communicate their vision of the future to employees and inspire them to raise their own standards. For course details tel 0171 828 0999 or e-mail SL2@caspienpublishing.co.uk

Maths

The Open University is offering a one-year distance learning course for those wishing to explore the basics of mathematics. Developed for people with only relatively basic literacy and numeracy skills, *MU120 Open Mathematics*, focuses on maths in the everyday world, giving a mathematical perspective to matters of general interest such as health, music, day-to-day economics, the arts and natural world. The course is divided into four blocks and takes up about seven hour's study a week. For further information call 01908 652590 or e-mail crel-gen@open.ac.uk

Mediation standards

The Centre for Dispute Resolution (CEDR) (0171 600 0500) has launched its own Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course for mediators, which establishes a common standard that CEDR hopes will be adhered to. The standards will provide a framework for individual development through a programme of continued training, education and experience. CEDR also runs a core five-day training course on mediation skills and process.

New catalogues

Reflecting the growing demand for interactive training solutions, Video Arts' latest catalogue includes a new VA Interactive section. Covering CD-ROM-based courses, and including new programmes on call centre skills and staff selection, this

section gives details of courses that can be used at individual desktop PCs and learning centres. Also new to Video Arts' catalogue is *Dilbert's Meeting Breaks*, a series of short videos featuring the well-known cartoon character's observations on meetings, sales, managing change, quality and bosses. Further information is available on 0845 6012531.

The new catalogue from Melrose (0171 627 8404) features *MindCym*, one of the design council's Government backed 'millennium products'. For senior executives, the catalogue includes a section called *The Professionals*, covering a wide range of management programmes.

Audio-visual and presentation equipment specialist Vivitar Communications has produced its first full colour catalogue, which also includes details of equipment from Elmo. The catalogue covers LCD projectors, visual presenters, large screen monitors, combination TV/VCRs, slide projectors, overhead projectors and a slide to video converter, together with accessories. Further information is available on 01793 526211.

Opportunity for entrepreneurs

The Centre for Enterprise and Management at Bolton Business School is currently recruiting managers of small businesses for its two-year part-time MBA in Small Business Management programme. This is designed to make management training more relevant to small businesses and to assist entrepreneurs to grow their businesses while achieving an internationally recognised qualification. Further information is available on 01204 903691.

Personal and professional development

The University of Bradford Management Centre (01274 234455) has developed a course for developing leadership skills using Shakespeare's plays.

Mythodrama is a new form of arts-based experiential learning, developed from the fields of theatre, personal and professional development. Richard Oliver in collaboration with Wild Dance Events and the Globe Theatre has created a series of interactive seminars using the plays of William Shakespeare to provide insight into leadership styles, dilemmas and solutions. This new working method encourages participants to go on an imaginative journey through the selected play and conducts directed exercises that bring the principle themes and characters to life.

PC support

There is a huge shortage of skilled and qualified technicians and in today's ever-increasing computer environment the PC Technician is becoming a key figure within the industry. A+ Certification is an industry-recognised qualification for trained PC support technicians.

InfoSource has launched *The Total Solution to A+ Certification* computer-based training programme, which enables trainees to learn everything required for PC troubleshooting, repair and maintenance, and gain the A+ qualification. Packaged in a handy-to-carry CD case, the course consists of two parts – the A+ DOS/Windows Service Technician exam (software) and the A+ Core Service Technician requirements (hardware). Further information is available free on 0800 318923.



Brian Tucker reviews

Brian Tucker is Company Secretary and Co-ordinator for The Forum for Technology in Training, and a technology-based training consultant. He may be contacted on 0151 342 8606.

FIT FOR CLAIT

The National Extension College (NEC)
Tutor-supported CD-ROM

This CD-ROM is really a resource for tutors who are supporting students for the RSA CLAIT (Computer Literacy And Information Technology) assignments in word-processing, spreadsheets and databases. Each of these three main topics is divided into sections designed to give a background to IT or CLAIT; for diagnosis of a student's current IT skill levels; for demonstration of CLAIT skills; for learning and repeatedly practising a skill; for building up the skill of creating a whole document, spreadsheet or database; and for practising assessments.

The learning takes one from the very basics through to complete documents, spreadsheets or databases. The ability to practise your assessment is a valuable part of the whole system, as practise is important before taking a final assessment. It is unfortunate that, at present, RSA rules do not permit students to use *Fit for CLAIT* to do their assessments.

This is a very good way to assess someone's current knowledge and skill levels and allow them to learn, prac-

tise and prepare for their assessment. It is also very good from the student's point of view as it leads them slowly through the learning from the very simple to the more complicated. Even when doing exercises in the 'Where do I start?' section, it gives the facility to go to the 'How do I?' section if you are having difficulties. It is very thorough and that is what is needed for new people, yet it has the facility for selecting only that part that is needed for those who are more competent. An experienced person need only do the 'Practise your Assessments' before being assessed.

Tutors can add their own documents to the list of stored practice assessments.

There was just one small criticism and that is that when copying data from the task box it was necessary to scroll down to see more data.

If, like me, you are looking at the keyboard rather than the screen, it is possible to start typing into the exercise, rather than into the document.

It also assumes that you are familiar with moving windows around the screen as the instructions often overlap the working area.

Having said that I was impressed with the detail of this learning material.

Forum for Technology in Training

Dr Anne Wright, Chief Executive, University for Industry will be speaking at the formal lunch following the Forum for Technology in Training's AGM on 21 April 1999 at Stationers Hall, Ave Maria Lane, London. Tickets for the lunch are priced at £50.00 for Forum members, £60.00 for members of BAOL, BIMA, TACT & UK MM-SIG and £70.00 for guests. Tickets are available for Brian Tucker, Forum Secretary. 0151 342 8606 or e-mail brian@forumtt.org.uk



Leslie Rae reviews

Leslie can be contacted at Ellray Associates,
29 Laburnum Grove, Sheffield S21 1GR, tel 0114 248 3725

THE FACILITATION OF GROUPS

Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey and Bill Taylor

Gower, paperback,
212 pages, £18.99
ISBN 0 566 08153 9

This is the paperback edition of the hardback published in late 1996 and reviewed in *Training Officer*. The review at that time recommended the

publication and included the comment:

'The authors are Zen enthusiasts and the text reflects this substantially, although there is also considerable traditional material. However, if you are a Zen enthusiast trainer you will welcome the approach; if you are not, you will find that it does not seri-

ously get in the way and in fact demonstrates the practical and mainly commonsense application of Zen ideals.

I found this an interesting, useful and certainly different book for trainers who wish to develop their range of skills. I certainly learned something and was also reminded of some approaches I had not used or encountered for some time.'

I see no reasons to modify those views in any way.

The book is in two sections, the first describing and giving

advice on all aspects of facilitation, not only facilitating the group, but also the essential aspect of facilitating oneself. The text is full of practical guidance, advice, checklists and so on, for facilitation in a wide range of circumstances.

The second section is a toolkit which includes suggestions for a workshop design, model and programme; meeting design; project design; evaluation design; and a facilitator's training programme – all bearing in mind facilitation rather than instruction. This section is completed by sixteen facilitator training activities.

FACILITATION MADE EASY: PRACTICAL TIPS TO IMPROVE FACILITATION IN WORKSHOPS

Esther Cameron

Kogan Page, paperback,
144 pages, £15.99
ISBN 0 7494 2756 6

Many training courses are still run along 'traditional', almost chalk-and-talk lines, although this is frequently not the most effective approach, the course or workshop usually benefiting from one that is practical and experiential. Many events that would benefit from this latter approach fail to be modified, frequently because a lot of trainers feel that if they stop being the leading light in the event, learning will not be achieved or, perhaps more commonly, they feel that power and control will be taken away from them and the learners will run the event. They may feel that this latter approach would not be a bad thing, but are concerned about their skills to deal with it – in other words, to stop being the trainer and become a facilitator. These concerns are legitimate and lack of facilitative skills can have an equally detrimental effect on the learning as on the 'teacher' approach.

This book sets out to help trainers convert their approaches into facilitative ones, debunking the 'mysteries' of facilitation and showing that the skills are not the sole preserve of OD consultants and business psychologists. The book is directed not only at trainers who wish to attain skill in facilitation, but also line managers who involve themselves in the development of their staff.

Eight clear, well-written chapters cover the subject of running a facilitated workshop, in a logical manner. The first chapter introduces facilitation, workshops, the facilitator's role and style, and the workshop lifecycle; then the psychology of groups is discussed in clear, non-jargon terms; this is followed by planning, setting up the environment and materials, running and following-up a workshop; using external facilitators; a learning plan to improve facilitation skills; example workshop designs and programmes; and much, much more.

The book abounds in helpful checklists, guides, bullet lists and so on, all helping the transition process along. If you are newly appointed to

the training and development function and will have to operate in a facilitative mode, or a traditional trainer who is having to convert to the new role, an experienced facilitator who wants to refresh his/her

views and ideas, or a manager who wants to help his/her staff develop, but does not want to become a 'stand-up' trainer, you will find much of interest and use. Well recommended.

Human Resources Development Week 1999 National Hall, Olympia, 13-15 April

What are the latest advances in technology-based training? How can organisations encourage self-managed learning? What is the most effective way of developing teambuilding skills? Training and development professionals will have the opportunity to find practical solutions to these and many other issues at this year's Human Resource Development Week exhibition in London. Now in the thirteenth year, some 300 provides of training products and services will take part in the 1999 show.

The exhibition will feature organisations from all areas of the training world. The European commission will be providing details of its Leonardo da Vinci programme promoting excellence in vocational training. Psychometric and assessment specialist SHL will showcase its latest personality questionnaire while HR software company Snowdrop systems will be demonstrating a new computer package designed for use on intranets.

Over 50 eminent speakers will lead seminars over the three-day conference, which has as its theme 'Training matters'. The key issues featured are the future of work, knowledge management, HR strategy, organisational change and creativity.

For further details or to book, call the IPD Conference Hotline on 0181 332 0044.

CAREER PLANNING

Jenny Hill

Echelon Training Ltd, A4 ring-binder resource pack, £169 plus £5 carriage
ISBN 1 901600 02 5

CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

Gael Lindenfield

Echelon Training Ltd, A4 ring-binder resource pack, £169 plus £5 carriage
ISBN 1 901600 03 3

These are two new activity resource packs from a new (to me) activity publisher. Each ringbinder contains 30 activities that are concerned with the title subjects. The activities are laid out in the format of purpose; time required; numbers; materials required; instructions; a summary; and all handouts, activity sheets and visuals required in *Confidence Builders*, with more variety of layout in *Career Planning*. The layouts of the activities are very clear and comprehensive for use in self-development and training activities. The time required for the activities ranges from 20 to 45 minutes, the majority requiring 30 minutes.

Career Planning activities include Time Mapping; My Key Workskills; Developing Career Resilience; Constructing a Clear CV; Networking; Up is not the Only Way; and so on, and in *Confidence Builders*, Building Self-esteem; Become more Proactive; Confident Listening; Powerful Praise; The Art of Self-promotion; Confident Presentations; Risk Taking; and so on. Most of the

activities in both packs are fresh ones rather than, as so often happens, reshapes of many-times repeated oldies. As in the best activity collections, the individual ones can either stand alone or can be combined easily in a mix-and-match course or workshop programme.

Accompanying each pack is a separate booklet, a *Trainer's Guide*, of 12 pages for *Career Planning* and 35 pages for *Confidence Builders*. The *Career Planning* booklet contains such guidelines as Planning a Workshop; Leading a Discussion; One Minute Critic (a reactionnaire for a workshop); a Career Planning Programme; and a shortlist of self-help workbooks.

The *Confidence Builders* booklet contains sections on planning and preparing training sessions; frameworks for training techniques; checklists of training methods; and sample programmes for running four different modules using the activities.

I found these resource packs refreshing and can recommend them to training practitioners or managers who are interested in self-development.

In addition, via the Internet (www.learningmatters.com), thumbprints of all Echelon's published activities can be viewed and the activities themselves purchased on-line either singly or in mixed multiples. This service has been described in the January/February 1999 issue of *Training Journal*.

Back Issues of Training Officer & Training Journal

Back issues of *Training Officer & Training Journal* are available at £7.00 per copy (including p&p).

To place an order by phone, call 01353 665533.

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Steve Holman reviews

Steve is Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, Department of Retail and Marketing. He may be contacted on 0161 247 3889.

SAFE LIFTING AND MANUAL HANDLING HOW TO DO IT RIGHT

The Loss Prevention Council
Melrose Ave Borehamwood
Herts WD6 2BJ
Email: info@lpc.co.uk

Safe Lifting and Manual Handling is a 13 minute VHS

VT costing £59.50 plus VAT. It recognises that many lifting and handling accidents are avoidable and gives three basic principles to follow to minimise the chances of injury. Everyone to some extent performs lifting and manual handling, and the film therefore covers a variety of

occupations to illustrate its learning points.

The VT is perfect for a specialist audience or an induction course. It could help any employer to fulfil his/her statutory obligations and be of practical application to all who are involved in lifting or manual handling acts. As a preventative exercise all employees would benefit from spending the 13 minutes viewing the VT.

The film is good entertainment, featuring Gary Taylor, former World's Strongest

Man, and contains some interesting clips of film illustrating feats of strength. Throughout there is sound advice which helps to make the learning acceptable. Comments like 'It isn't about weight, it is about posture' and 'It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it' followed by examples, all contribute to a professional package.

There is a good summary at the close of the film and the viewer is left with no doubts about correct techniques and procedures.

UK-HRD snippets

For those of you who don't already know, UK-HRD is simply one of the best ways for trainers to keep in touch with one another. Set up as a service for those readers of *Training Journal* who have access to the Internet, this networking forum is easy to join. To subscribe send an e-mail to majordomo@ukhrd.com saying 'subscribe network'.

As usual, there have been some very interesting and useful exchanges of information and views on the network recently. Here is an extract of some of the discussion that has taken place.

Poetry in training

In response to Ray Wilcox's request for a poem that he had seen used in training circles about 'Someone, no-one, everyone' James Smith and Paul Harris came up with nearly identical versions of the following poem.

This is a story about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Nobody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody

could do it but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when actually Nobody asked Anybody.

Paul Harris recommends using this poem in management training courses as a slide at the end of a day.

Harassment in the workplace Emer O'Beirne is looking for ideas, session notes, exercises, role-plays, and general advice about all forms of harassment in the workplace, including sexual and bullying.

Mark Polden forwarded information about an Information Pack called *Harassment in The Workplace*, published by the Industrial Society. It covers sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power issues. (Unfortunately, this is no longer in print, but a new pack *Harassment, bullying and violence at work - a practical guide to combating employee abuse* will be released by the Industrial Society this month.) Gillian Thompson recommends *Sex at Work*, a new book that is also published by the Industrial Society. Further information is available on 0171 479 2000.

BBC for Business publishes two relevant packs: one on bullying at work and the other on sexual harassment. Both of these include videos and two-day workshops. Further information is available on 0181 576 2361.

Michael Coate recommends a series of videos called *Pest Control* produced by Open Learning People (0191 2590076), while Roger Pattison sent details about *Valuing Diversity at Work*, a train-

er's activity pack published by Fenman (01353 665533), which has some short case studies.

Colin Rosen directed Emer to the Uxbridge-based Employee Advisory Resource Ltd (EAR), which provides an employee counselling service (tel 018945 271155).

Des Powell sent details about *The International Harassment Network Annual Conference*, which is to be held on 12-13 May in Preston, Lancashire. This is a two-day international conference dealing with workplace harassment and bullying for HR and EO professionals, trades unionists, researchers, lawyers and anyone else interested in current knowledge and best practice. Further information is available from V Merchant on 01772 728627, fax 01772 761002.

Flexible delivery of training

Alison Rose is looking for help with the delivery of training to a flexible workforce. Many of the staff at NCA Action for Children are employed on a casual basis, some are residential and many are part time. Many have domestic responsibilities and are unavailable for travel to distant venues or for overnight stays. Training courses of the traditional kind are problematic. Alison is planning to do a study of how other organisations with a dispersed workforce have tackled the problem of delivering effective training to a consistent standard.

Sandy Mcmillan recommends setting up 'online collaborative learning groups'. If everyone has e-mail then they can work in small groups to study, discuss, devise actions and examine the

consequences of these, and get support from one another as a tutor/facilitator. Learners can log on at a time that suits them. The learning group continues for some months so that the learning gets applied, supported and monitored in the working situation. The crucial factor, according to Sandy, seems to be the behaviour of the facilitator, especially in the early stages, in promoting collaboration, genuine dialogue and effective action. For more information about this type of learning send an e-mail to Sandy@careern.demon.co.uk or <http://www.careersolutions.co.uk>

Alan J Moss recommends taking a distance learning approach, splitting up the syllabus into easy chunks, setting self-tests on the way, and giving each member of staff a log book. The supervisor/trainer visits members of staff individually, when they are ready, gives a test, or discusses any problems, and then presents the next stage, and so on. This method can be used either through trainers, or through a number of line supervisors who would be authorised to 'sign off' each stage. Alan has seen a similar system used in New Zealand where there is a problem of distance.

If you have any further ideas, views or advice to add to the above or would like to comment about any training issues in general please send a letter to the Editor, Training Journal, Clive House, The Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4EH. Alternatively send a fax to 01353 663644 or e-mail trainingjournal@fenman.co.uk

DATE & VENUE	EVENT	CONTACT
24-25 April Watford	NLP Modular Programme – The Hypnotic Trainer	A D International, Sherwood House, 7 Oxhey Road, Watford, Herts WD1 4QF; tel 01923 224737.
26-27 April Loughborough	Assessing Workplace Violence	Joyce Bostock, Centre for Hazard & Risk Management, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU; tel 01509 222175; fax 01509 223991.
27-28 April Leicester	Caring for Your Customers	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
28 April Birmingham	How Will TECs Lead Training for Britain?	Helen Bourke, Conference Manager, National Training Resources Ltd, PO Box 4380 Tamworth Staffordshire B79 ODB; tel 01827 63919; fax 01827 60836.
5-6 May London	Powerful Presentation Skills	The Customer Service Manager, ICMD, 6th Floor, 29 Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DR; tel 0171 915 5380; fax 0171 915 5384.
11 May Thames Valley	Speed/Range Reading	Illuimine Limited, PO Box 435, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 4GT; tel 01753 719926; fax 01753 719936.
11-13 May Leicester	Talking, Listening and Getting your Message Across: communication skills for frontline staff	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
14 May Edinburgh	Claims and Audits for EU-funded Projects	Short Course Unit, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Bradford, Bradford, BD7 1DP; tel 01274 233217/6; fax 01274 233218.
18 May Leicester	Learning about Learning	Frontline Training, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester LE1 7QA; tel 0116 241 4998.
18-20 May London	The Times Spring Crème – Executive Secretary Show	IIR Exhibitions Ltd, Francis House, King's Head Yard, New City Court, London SE1 1NA; tel 0171 453 5346; fax 0171 453 5302.
19 May Moreton-in-Marsh	Performance Management in the Public Sector: The wider Application of Performance Standards	Judith Smith, Competence, Development and Performance Network, University of Leicester, 7/9 Salisbury Road, Leicester, LE1 7QR; tel 0116 252 5954; fax 0116 252 5953.
4 June Solihull	Getting and Keeping Good Car and Van Drivers	Brake's Road Risk Forum, tel 01306 741113.
7-8 June London	Management Development and Information (Conference and Exhibition)	Careers in Industry Ltd, Carlton Plaza, 111 Upper Richmond Road, London SW15 2TJ; tel 0181 785 2288; fax 0181 785 3388.
15-17 June London	TeleCon Europe (Conference and Exhibition)	Helen Gardner, Advanstar Communications (UK) Ltd, Advanstar House, Park West, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 4RN; tel 01244 378 888; fax 01244 370011.
23-24 June London	Computers in Personnel (Conference and Exhibition)	IPD, IPD House, Camp Road, London SW19 4UX; tel 0181 971 9000; fax 0181 263 3366.

Free listings on this page are included at the discretion of the editors. However, any company wishing to make a firm booking may do so for a nominal fee of £15.00 + VAT (total, £17.63) for each entry. Entries are limited to three per company in any one issue. Please send your entry details, with cheque, four weeks prior to publication date. Cheques should be made payable to Fenman Limited and sent to *Training Journal*, Clive House, The Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4EH.

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